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THE FAIR HILLS OF IRELAND

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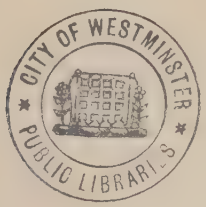
THE FAIR HILLS OF IRELAND

BY

STEPHEN GWYNN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

HUGH THOMSON



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WITHDRAWN
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BREAD STREET HILL, E.C., AND
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TO W. S. GREEN, F.R.G.S.,

H.M. Inspector of Irish Fisheries; Member of the Congested Districts Board of Ireland.

My dear Green,

Here is a book about the life of Ireland, inscribed to you because no man has helped its writer so much to realise Irish history, whether of the past or of the present. I cannot hope to quicken interest as you quickened mine, for you had the seas and the winds, the mountains and the rocky shores, boats and nets, men's faces and voices, their speech and actions, to be a part in your instruction. But something of the virtue of that teaching may perhaps make itself felt even in what I write, as here, of places where I had not your company to enrich and enliven my pages; and if so, it is as well that my readers should know where the virtue comes from.

But there is another gratitude which I make occasion to express here, for want of some place more fitting—the gratitude which all of us must feel towards whoever can provide Irishmen with the means of a fair livelihood at home. When Government set out to help the Irish-speaking seaboard to reap and profit by the dangerous harvest which lay within reach of skill and courage, a man was needed to direct the undertaking. Seaman he must be, and fisherman, knowing all the conditions of the craft; but a man of science also, who had knowledge of many things that lifelong observation could not teach the shrewdest handler of line or net, pookaun or curragh. More than that, he needed the large general intelligence which could conquer difficult problems of transit and market, setting the slow forces of trade at motion in new channels. But above all, a man he must be who knew and liked the Irish peasantry, with that understanding of their qualities and their limitations which is born, not of sentiment nor of conviction, but of long fellowship and

homely liking—who could teach without pedantry or impatience the work which had to be done, and could encourage by the appeal to natural motives. Such a man was not easy to find, and when the choice lighted upon you, it was a lucky day for you, since every man is lucky who gets the chance to do the work for which he is precisely suited, and the more important that work, the luckier he. But above all, it was a lucky day for the Irish speakers from Donegal to Kerry and West Cork. If to-day on the bay that I know best there are sixty or seventy boats earning big money at the herring where twenty years ago no buyer ever showed his face and no boat carried sail, I do most earnestly believe that the change is due, humanly speaking, not to yourself alone, for there at all events you have had the help that you deserved—but to yourself more than to any one man in Ireland. And since Boards and officials do not come by too much thanks, let me here thank you not only for what you have done for me, but for what you have done for my friends.

STEPHEN GWYNN

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THE FAIR HILLS OF IRELAND

THE FAIR HILLS OF IRELAND

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—THE PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THIS BOOK

Beir beannaċt ó mo ċroiḋe go tír na h-Éireann,
Bán-ċnoic Éireann O!
'S ċum a mairionn de ṡíolraċ Ír is Éiḃear
Ar ḃán-ċnoic Éireann, O!
An áit úd 'narb 'aoiḃinn binn-ġuṫ éan
Mar ṡám-ċruit ċaoin ag caoine Gaeḋeal;
Is é mo ċas a ḃeiṫ míle míle i-gcéin
O ḃán-ċnoic Éireann, Ó!

Donncaḋ Ruaḋ MacConmara.

Take a blessing from my heart to the land of my birth
And the fair Hills of Eire, O!
And to all that yet survive of Eber's tribe on earth
On the fair Hills of Eire, O!
In that land so delightful the wild thrush's lay
Seems to pour a lament forth for Eire's decay—
Alas! alas! why pine I a thousand miles away
From the fair Hills of Eire, O!

James Clarence Mangan.

This book is written—like Red Donough Macnamara's lyric from which it borrows its title—in praise of Ireland. Praise is often superfluous or dull; yet pleasure no less than love increases with

fuller understanding, and to praise a country rightly is to give some understanding of its soil and its people, its mountains and plains, seas and rivers, cities and solitudes ; its ways of life and thought, its history and its aspirations, its failures and possibilities, its joy and its grief. Though to accomplish this to the full is more than even the greatest writer could do for the smallest principality, yet an Irishman attempting it may hope to convey something of the knowledge, and something of the feeling, that has prompted in him the fairest of all literary motives—the desire to praise.

In that hope then this book has been written, for the traveller rather than for the tourist, for Irishmen rather than for strangers; but in general for all who will sympathise with the project which sent two of us out on a pilgrimage of pleasure undertaken in pursuit of knowledge. Our object was to represent by typical instances Ireland as a whole ; and so, to a number of places and districts up and down the country we went looking for what would help to realise, for ourselves and for others, Ireland as she is, and as she has been. And this pilgrimage, though followed on the map it seems random and arbitrary, was made on a fixed principle which an illustration will best explain.

If you set down a geologist anywhere in Ireland and give him time and the opportunity to dig and investigate, he will demonstrate to you there—provided he can dig deep enough—the history of the

soil and rock he stands on. Stratum by stratum, he will show you the successive deposits ; but in any given place, some particular phase in the geological history of Ireland will be salient and characteristic. Here it will be a story of subsidence, there of upheaval ; here of wearing away, there of piling up. But whether in the alluvial valley of the Shannon, or the basaltic outcrop of north-east Antrim, your geologist can infer for you the story of Ireland, with special reference to one place, and special insistence on one incident in the evolution of the whole.

In like manner there is no townland in Ireland so insignificant but that if you could trace back all that happened there you would have a history of Ireland from one limited point of view. And there is no one of the places where great things have been done and suffered for Ireland, but keeps evidence of historic strata (so to speak) before and after that moment by which specially it is named and known.

Our plan, then, was to select a certain number of such characteristic centres, and by visiting each to obtain that sense of contact with reality which mere reading does not easily afford. Partly, then, we have been compiling a guide-book to places of historic interest in Ireland ; but also we hope that a book has been made which will have a more general interest. Every chapter calls up associations covering a great range in the story of the Irish race ; and the chapters have been grouped in a chronological sequence, beginning with those places where the

salient interest belongs to a very remote age. The selection had to be somewhat arbitrary : in Armagh, for instance, and the country about it, there are many things to think of, but the rath of Emain Macha seemed to dominate them, and the chapter is therefore set at the point assigned by historians to the legendary glories of Conchobar MacNessa and his champions of the Red Branch. Yet the triumphs of the Yellow Ford and of Benburb are not forgotten in the story—still less the ecclesiastical and scholarly traditions of St. Patrick's see.

Thus in one sense the history of Ireland will be illustrated generally by desultory topographical references in each chapter, with special and detailed insistence on that period for which the chapter stands ; but in a more definite manner also, the whole book is designed to present the reader with a continuous view of Irish history, stratum by stratum, up to a certain point, fixed for reasons which must be explained.

By the study of Irish history is meant, nine times out of ten, study of the relations between Ireland and England. Yet everyone admits that the period when Irish genius produced its most characteristic work in literature, and its only characteristic work in art—the period when Ireland played a part, at times great and always considerable, in the history of Europe—lies within the seven centuries before the Norman invasion, and not within the seven hundred unhappy years which succeeded to that great turning point.

The stretch of Irish history, then, which we have chosen to illustrate, by presenting various successive phases in its development, is the earlier range when Ireland was still (even in spite of the Danes) Ireland of the Gael, not Ireland of the Gael and the Gall. This material lent itself the better to our method because here regular history is as yet impossible ; and it seems likely that many readers will be glad to meet not only some description of the monuments which survive from those early days, but also passages gathered from the early documents, out of which now at last faithful and laborious study is building up a truly historic record.

The impossibility of executing in a manner to defy criticism such a task as is here undertaken almost dispenses me from the need of apology for the book's shortcomings. Yet it cannot be made too clear that the object of these pages is not so much to teach, as to suggest a line of thought and study which have been for the writer fruitful of endless pleasure and interest. Whoever goes in quest of such information as is given in these pages will find everywhere (if my own happy experience be any guide) that even a little knowledge, or the mere desire to learn, is a passport to good will : that in libraries, public and private, generous direction will be lavishly bestowed : and that abroad, in the fields or in the towns, men are to be met with for whom the past of their own particular district is hardly less familiar than the present. My task has been again and again to transmit in writing

(if I only could!) the vivid perceptions which were raised in my mind by such men, true spiritual descendants of the ancient ollaves, who, out of the fulness of their knowledge, told me the story of the rath, the monastery, the city wall, or the battlefield, by which we chanced to stand. If I name my special gratitude to Dr. Costello of Tuam, it is not without an inward recognition of the fact that he, alone of all the friendly and hospitable antiquarians whom I met with, was also an angler, and took me out fishing. And that is not so irrelevant as it may seem—to those who are not fishers.

For this book is written to advocate intelligent travel in Ireland; but the traveller—whom I distinguish sharply from the tourist—if he goes to enrich his mind, goes also to get all the fun he can out of the business. The places written of in this book are many of them quite out of the tourist track and away from the regular resorts of anglers: yet (thank goodness!) there are few spots in Ireland where fishing cannot be had, and I have not yet found the place where there was nothing worth seeing. But let us be quite honest. There is very little in this guide-book to guide any one to what is called nowadays "natural scenery." For my own part I see nothing unnatural in a field growing corn, a lakeside finely planted, a river bank with mills on it, or the bight of a bay filled with its town, beyond blue sea and under purple mountains. But scenery to be "natural," in the modern acceptance of the term, must not show the

trace of man's handiwork; and of such scenery we have our share in Ireland. Yet, so I am told, in this we cannot compete with Scotland: there will always be some intrusive cabin with its blue reek, some stray patch of scanty oats or potatoes, to mar the perfect repose of town-bred imagination. Still, even with these drawbacks there are plenty of wildernesses in Connemara, in Kerry, in Sligo, and in Donegal, fair enough to tempt description; but not of them has this book to treat. It concerns itself with the life of Ireland—the life that is, or was—too often, with the life that has disappeared, leaving only ruin or stagnation. Yet looking back on months of journeying, of coming into little leisurely grey-blue towns with the dusk of evening, of setting out in bright mornings to sketch and study broad-brimming navigable rivers, lush pastures, nobly planted hill slopes,—it seems as if lack of beauty were the last thing one had to complain of. And, at almost every point in the journey, beauty of another sort was also to be seen and studied—the beauty that devout hands had fashioned to the glory of their faith, the beauty that strong builders had bestowed upon their castled mansions—a beauty pathetic now in its imperfection, shining through disfigurement, yet often enhanced by that perfect adjustment to its surroundings which only the ruin can achieve.

There is one more thing to say. Writing of Ireland, I have written, so far as my ignorance allowed me, in the spirit and with the help of that

native Irish literary and historical tradition whose value is as yet strangely underrated even amongst ourselves to-day. An instance is not far to seek. Every educated man and woman of the Irish race at home and abroad knows the name and the tragic story of Clarence Mangan; yet how few remember the hedge school poet of the eighteenth century, not less interesting and by far more typical a figure, whose lines, with Mangan's translation of them, I have set at the head of these pages. And here I may give, what is more strictly to my purpose, the closing verse of Red Donough's superb poem; for it sums up the very scope and compass of all that this book is written to express.

Is fosguilteac fáilteaċ an áit sin Éire,
Ban-ċnoic Éireann O!
Bíḋeann toraḋ na sláinte i-mbarr na déise
I mban-ċnoic Éireann O!
Ba ḃinne liom ná méarai ar ṫéadaiḃ ċeóil
Seinm 'r geimreaḋ a laog 'r a mbó,
Taiṫnioṁ na gréine orra, aosda 'r óg,
Ar ḃán-ċnoic Éireann, O!

A fruitful clime is Eire's, through valley, meadow, plain,
And the fair land of Eire, O!
The very Bread of Life is in the yellow grain
On the fair Hills of Eire, O!
Far dearer unto me than the tones music yields
Is the lowing of her kine and the calves in her fields,
And the sunlight that fell long ago on the shields
Of the Gaels, on the fair Hills of Eire, O!

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THE BOYNE WATER.

CHAPTER II

THE BOYNE VALLEY, AND THE MONUMENTS OF BRUGH

The ancient Irish were neither builders of cities nor, to any great extent, users of the sea. Of the seaport towns which to-day stand prominent, Dublin, Limerick, Waterford, and Wexford are of Danish origin; Belfast and Derry of English; Cork and Galway perhaps truly Irish, yet at Cork St. Finbarre established a university rather than a city, and the importance of Galway only begins after a Norman walled it and planted there a colony from which the Irish were rigorously excluded. For the first centres of Irish life we must look elsewhere.

From the earliest times the wealth of the country lay in cattle, and the chief seats of sovereignty were found commanding some district of rich pasturage; at Cruachan in Roscommon, at Cashel in the Golden Vale, at Ardmacha in the fruitful plains draining into Lough Neagh, at Dunlavin or Naas in the broad champaign of Kildare; but above all, at Tara in the richest part of the richest and most central province, the kingdom of Meath, which was cut out and set

apart for the High King of Eire. In early Irish story we hear little of Liffey or Lee, of Foyle or Lagan; but the valley of the Boyne is the very focus of the whole. And since by a chance of military movements the Boyne was also the scene of the most decisive event in modern Irish history, it is on all grounds right to make our beginning here. Nowhere else does the solid substratum of fact which underlies the half-legendary story of pagan Ireland make itself so plainly felt; nowhere else have we so complete and striking a series of landmarks to guide imagination through the centuries down to the present day.

It would be idle to attempt a complete summary of the historic associations which can be unearthed within a radius of twelve miles round Navan, which stands at the meeting of Boyne with its affluent the Blackwater. Tara is five miles to the south, Tailtenn (almost of equal importance in ancient annals) about as far to the north: Kells, Monasterboice, and Mellifont suggest the successive glories of Irish Christianity, Trim, the castellated strength of Norman rule; while close to the scene of William's victory lies Drogheda with its bitter memory of Cromwell. And round each of these landmarks of pagan Ireland, early Christian Ireland, feudal Ireland, rebel Ireland, a whole group of others might be gathered. Here, even less than elsewhere, shall I attempt to be exhaustive; but here, also, in this opening chapter I shall be somewhat more concerned to provide a kind

of a chronological skeleton—to establish typically the enchainment of events.

Almost with the first beginnings of Irish legendary history the name of Tara appears. We are told of two earlier colonies than the Firbolgs, but no race earlier than they is said to have effected a permanent lodgment in Ireland, and their king Slainge (according to Irish bardic tradition) established at Tara the first monarchy. After the Firbolgs came the Tuatha de Danann, a fair-haired tall people of magical powers, who routed the little dark men, took possession of Tara, and erected there one of their special treasures, the *Lia Fáil*, or Stone of Destiny, on which every High King was inaugurated. Dates are given for these happenings, and the coming of the Tuatha de Danann is confidently put down at the year of the world 3303—that is, by Irish reckoning, 1896 B.C. Two hundred years later (according to the same tradition) came the last of these pre-historic colonising expeditions—that of the Milesians, who under Eber and Eremon defeated the magic-working de Danann, and got possession of the country.

Four hundred years later (about 1200 B.C.) the full honour was given to Tara (again according to tradition) by the great King Ollamh Fódhla,[1] who

[1] Using English character, I am obliged to adopt the clumsy convention which represents the Irish aspirating mark by an *h*. But this *h* is only sounded after *c*, as in Cruachan. *Mh* represents either *v* (as in Ollamh) or *w* (as in Samhain). Other consonants are generally silenced by it, as in Fodhla, Fóla.

decreed a triennial Féis, or assembly, to be held there at Samhain (November 1st) for a revision of the laws and historical records. It will be seen how far-reaching a sanction is claimed for all this chronicle, since the tradition means that records were regularly kept by the State for 2,500 years before Strongbow. Yet one cannot say that all such tradition proves more than this : that in the earliest Irish history transmitted to us Tara figures as an immemorial seat of law-giving and sovereignty.

As we approach the Christian era, persons and places in the story grow more definite, and at last a singular passage occurs. We read that the Firbolgs and other plebeian races (who had been enslaved for some fifteen hundred years) revolted and set a king of their own on the throne ; and that King Tuathal Teachtmhar, having after eight years restored the Milesian rule to its rightful position, added new solemnity to the Féis at Tara, and gave fresh life to the great annual fair at Tailtenn.

This is the point at which a critical scholar, basing his theories on purely Irish material, opines that authentic history may find at least a starting-point. The theory put forward by Mr. Eoin MacNeill must be more fully stated in my chapters on Tara and on Cashel. Here it is only needful to say that he believes the Milesians to have entered Ireland, not sixteen hundred years before Christ, but under King Tuathal about 100 A.D They were, on this view, British tribes set in motion by the Roman conquest

of Britain ; and their first settlement was here in the valley of the Boyne, whence they ousted the previous rulers of Tara. In these earlier days Tara was only the seat of a petty tribal king, and this opinion detracts from the antiquity of such an institution as the famous Féis. But for my own part I find Tara more interesting when I can consider it as the chief focus and starting-point of that Milesian power which spread itself over almost the whole of Ireland, and under which Ireland attained to the highest point of her fame.

Whether Tuathal was a historic personage Mr. MacNeill hesitates to decide—affirming merely that what figures as the reconquest of Tara for the Milesians was in reality the first conquest by men of an alien race, whose descendants, seven or eight centuries later, preferred to believe that the Milesian claim on that sovereignty was half as old as Time. Tuathal is dated about the end of the first century ; his grandson, Conn the Hundred-Fighter, is hardly more mythical than Agamemnon. The customs of land-tenure and transmission of rule which prevailed universally among the Milesians made genealogies jealously guarded, and all the kings who ruled in the northern half of Ireland down to the Norman invasion traced their descent to Conn. From Conn's time—say 125 A.D. onward—the kingly figures who move in the Boyne valley grow more and more distinct ; and with the middle of the fourth century we reach the notable Niall of the Nine Hostages, who

was perhaps the first historic High King of Ireland. Niall's son, Loigaire or Laoghaire (whose descendants have softened the name down till it is pronounced in Irish nearly as in the English form of O'Leary), brings us out of legend altogether and into the clear light of written record. In 428 Laoghaire succeeded Dathi, who had succeeded Niall. In 433 St. Patrick landed at Inver Colptha—the Boyne estuary—and made his way to Tara. From that time onward Ireland was a part of Christendom ; yet sharply marked off from the rest of Christian Europe, because outside the Roman Empire.

The fifth century is filled with the missionary labours of Patrick, which radiated from the Boyne valley. Columba, the great saint of the succeeding age, who (unlike Patrick) was a scholar, founded at Kells—some six miles north of Navan on the Blackwater—a monastery which has left us one of the chief jewels of ancient Irish art. For with the increase of learning went increase of skill, and the Book of Kells, now treasured in the library of Trinity College, but copied and painted at Kells by some monk not later than the eighth century, is incomparably the first among all the illuminated manuscripts of the world. It is little wonder that men came from far to the home of such skill and learning ; and we get some measure of Ireland's place in Europe at that stage in her history when we read how a king of France was sent here to the Boyne valley to get his education at what was then the great

monastery of Slane—half way between Navan and Drogheda.

But while clerics were praying and teaching and writing and following all the arts of peace, fierce enemies were at the gate. Again and again during the ninth and tenth centuries this rich region was raided and devastated by Danish inroads. Monuments of that time stand in the round towers at Kells and Monasterboice—fine examples of those astounding belfries which were built all over Ireland in the days when religion had ceased to afford a sanctuary, and unarmed communities needed a place of sudden and safe retreat for themselves and their treasures. At Kells again and again alarm must have been given from the top of the high tower; and then the custodian of the famous Book would go scrambling up the wooden ladder to the narrow doorway—ten feet above the ground—carrying the Book and its *cumhdach*, or casket, along with him, and drawing the ladder up, once he and his comrades were inside. Then, Danes might break their axes or crowbars on the huge round pillar of masonry, but the Book and its keeper were safe.

Brian dealt with the Danes in the end, and from the day of Clontarf in 1014 they were of no more trouble to Ireland than any of its own tribes. But a worse enemy was to come; and since even historical imagination always seeks the woman, and provides a Helen for every Troy, a woman has been made the cause of all our woes in Ireland; and here in

the Boyne valley is the burial place of our Helen. Dervorguilla, whom Diarmuid MacMurrough, King of Leinster, carried off from her rightful lord O'Rourke, the Prince of Brefny, gave great gifts to the Abbey of Mellifont in 1152, and retired thither a generation later, to end her days, long after MacMurrough had brought the Norman-English in to help him in the feud which is represented as having arisen out of his abduction of O'Rourke's lady. Yet it is probable that if Diarmuid MacMurrough had not quarrelled concerning Dervorguilla with O'Rourke and with O'Rourke's overlord, Turlough O'Conor (who forced restitution of the queen and her dowry), some other cause of strife would have presented itself, and one or other of the combatants would have enlisted on his side the ambitions already awake on the other side of the Channel.

MacMurrough's allies came with every intention to be richly paid for their help, and from the first they took a strong grip on the land. At Trim, on the Boyne, is one of the finest examples of the great fortified castles (wholly new to Irish ideas) in which they entrenched their power; and Trim was first built by Hugh de Lacy as early as 1173—four years after Strongbow's landing. Later, when the necessities of defence were provided for, the Normans turned their skill to account in church building, as can be seen also at Trim, where they beautified St. Mary's Abbey, over against the castle, by the famous Yellow Steeple—now, of course, in ruins. Its demolition

marks another phase in the historic evolution—though hardly, perhaps, a step of progress. No country in Europe gained so little and lost so much by the Reformation as Ireland. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are filled with little but records of destruction. Building up begins at the earliest from 1750 onwards. The Boyne valley, so typical of all Irish history, shows no trace of existing magnificence except in the mansions of Protestant gentry and in the new-built Catholic churches; but in ruins of ancient splendour it is rich indeed. And here the two phases in the English conquest must be distinguished, if the story of Ireland is to be understood at all.

The Norman-English came to Ireland absolute aliens in race. They established a harsh domination, they excluded the Irish from any rights under the English laws which governed the settlers themselves. Yet in religion they were one with the people among whom they settled, and at least they enriched the country with splendid buildings, carrying on with ample resources a work in which the native Irish princes had always been forward. Moreover, in spite of law and custom, a gradual fusion went on. The great Norman houses—Butlers, Fitzgeralds, de Burgos, and the rest—were, through fosterage and intermarriage, becoming Irish in speech and in sympathy. Then came the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII., offering enormous bribes to such of the nobility and gentry as would side

with King against Church. Mellifont, with its graceful buildings, built by the Cistercians in the twelfth century, was made over to Garrett Moore (a name half Norman, half Irish), ancestor of the Marquises of Drogheda. What had once been the home of a community, a centre not only of religion but of active charity, became now a private dwelling house. But more frequently the monastic buildings were simply left derelict to crumble into ruin, as happened to Monasterboice, Mellifont's older neighbour; and the work was often accelerated in the wars under Elizabeth, when religious edifices were destroyed impartially by both sides as offering fortresses to the enemy. So perished much of the material inheritance from the work of Irish and Norman architects and sculptors. Worse still, the fusion of races was stopped abruptly, for the old Irish clung passionately to their faith. The second phase of conquest begins when the war is a war not of English against Irish, but of Protestant against Catholic, and when the object is not merely to subjugate the Irish and obtain the overlordship of their lands, but to extirpate the form of religious belief professed by the Irish. To many minds this latter project seemed to carry with it the necessity for extirpating the Irish themselves. Spenser's Lord Grey, the governor whom his poet chose as the embodied type of Justice, was of this opinion. A natural corollary was the scheme for planting Ireland with English cultivators, and conquest assumed the double character of a religious

Drogheda.

persecution and a confiscation of private property. Important steps to carry out this plantation policy were taken under James I., and in 1641 came the great rebellion, when the Catholics rose to recover what had been taken from themselves or their fathers. Mellifont stood a siege then as a fortified dwelling-house; but the chief link with that war is Drogheda, where Cromwell massacred the defenders. This ruthless severity was only the beginning of a course of action which can only be described as a negation of all civilised war. It found its logical conclusion in the sales of white men and women into slavery. Less ruinous, though the cause of much material ruin, was the deliberate iconoclasm of his soldiers; and probably the destruction of Trim's lovely steeple is assignable to sheer hatred of Papistical edifices. After the Cromwellian day, it seems there was little deliberate destruction, but how much was then left standing, and who was to repair the ravages? For, as an essential part of this phase of conquest, Catholics were forbidden to use the religious edifices for their own ceremonies, and Catholics were still the nation.

The concluding episode in that long-drawn-out conquest had its most dramatic moment by the Boyne:

> July the first in Oldbridge town
> There was a famous battle,
> Where many a man lay on the groun'—
> The cannons they did rattle.

With the ignominious flight of James and the

glorious death of Schomberg are closed the historic associations of the Boyne valley—as men count history.

Yet, if we look closer, the material of history is there. Events, indeed, there are none to be recorded for more than a century. In the days of the penal laws, from the reign of William and Mary till George III. had been already long on the throne, Ireland lay in a kind of lethargy, "bled to whiteness" by long centuries of the most devastating warfare. When life began to return, and blood to flow stronger, there came another fierce spasm of revolt; and the rebellion of 1798 left its trace here also—marked by the "Croppies' Grave" among the raths on Tara. With the nineteenth century began the constitutional effort of a people to recover mastery in its own land; and certainly one of the marking points in that effort is given by the day when O'Connell assembled at Tara half a million of the Catholics of Ireland to demand Repeal.

But the true materials for history are not given by these sporadic incidents—mere finger-posts or aids to memory that they are. A historian who wished to learn much of what has happened in the Boyne valley since the day of William's victory would need first to study the records of the fine spacious houses with their surrounding parks and demesnes which close in upon both banks of the beautiful river. Here he would have a view of the social order which grew up, strong and comfortable, supported tacitly

by the armed force of England. These are the newer monuments of civilisation—these homes which the Protestant gentry built for themselves when they ruled the country with an absolute dominion, and in some cases the heirs of those who built are still in occupation. But not in many: you will generally find these mansions occupied by a stranger who rents them for the sake of the Meath hunting: and the occupant, whether stranger or scion of the old stock, is to-day less powerful in the country than the poorest Catholic publican.

Take another aspect of history. Drogheda, where Cromwell and his men knocked on the head every priest they could discover, is to-day full of Catholic churches—most of them brand-new, none of them ancient. The religion is as strong as ever it was; but all the work of devout builders in bygone times, when men knew how to build and to give beauty to buildings, lies desolate and devastated.

Yet let me close this review on a note of more comfort. Within this year I have drunk cider made at Drogheda (and I never drank better), though nearly two generations have gone by since cider-making ceased in Ireland. I have smoked tobacco grown in the Boyne valley, and learnt with delight that the enterprising gentleman who made the experiment cleared fifty pounds an acre of profit on his crop. Other instances could be given (and shall be given elsewhere) to show that the Boyne valley is something of a centre

in the attempt to revive industrial life in Ireland, and to set on foot a campaign against the system of agriculture under which the land of Meath, perhaps the richest in these islands, is turned into a cattle ranche, and human inhabitants are ejected to make room for fat beasts.

So the story has been brought down to the present day in the roughest outline, without making reference to the monuments on which it is the special business of this chapter to dwell—monuments of ancient rulers who have left us nothing but names in a half-forgotten story, and their imperishable tombs.

There are few stranger subjects for conjecture than the work of those old races who with the rudest appliances moved and set in position monstrous blocks of stone—effecting by sheer labour of flesh and bone what might seem almost to demand a convulsion of nature. The purposes of their erections are sometimes obscure, as at Stonehenge ; but here in Brugh na Boinne, the great burying-place of pagan Ireland, we know at least the meaning of the vast sepulchres, at Knowth, at Dowth (ancient names both of them), and at New Grange, which beyond all reasonable doubt is Brugh itself,—the "mansion" or dwelling place of the august dead. So august indeed were its associations that not the dead kings only were accounted to rest inside the mound, but Angus also—Angus the Young, god of youth and love and music, so often renowned by the poets when in the

story of legendary wars they showed gods from the Tuatha de Danann mingling and lending assistance to this side or that, just as Olympian beings helped the human fighters before Troy. But our concern here is with its historic significance rather than its place in myth.

To reach these "caves" (if you set out from Dublin) it is necessary to go to Drogheda, about thirty miles north across the level plain of Fingal. King James rode it in one stretch from the hillside behind Oldbridge, and came in tired and hungry, complaining to Lady Tyrconnell that the Irish had run basely. "I see," said Lady Tyrconnell, who was an Irishwoman, "that your Majesty has won the race." James's road took him in through Swords, past the round tower and the abbey where Brian's body lay in state at the first stage of its funeral journey northwards to Armagh. But the railroad takes a short cut by a long bridge or mole across the estuary of the Swords river, at Malahide, and from the train you can see Portrane, where the most conspicuous object is a great asylum for lunatics, but where is also a ruined peel-tower, once, they say, used by Swift's Stella as a lodging when she came down here for summer bathing.

The line skirts along the sea past Rush and Lusk, where an enterprising seedsman makes the sandhills gay with a bulb-farm—acres of tulips and daffodils a-blow together—and past Skerries, where you can see in the offing the little island Inish Patrick, where the

missionary saint and his crew landed to get water and provisions. Ahead to the north you can see also on a clear day the glorious range of Mourne mountains purple or pearly beyond blue sea : there is not a prettier stretch of rail in Ireland, except the line down the Wicklow coast. But for some miles before you reach Drogheda it heads inland so as to strike the narrow neck of the Boyne estuary where the town is set astride of the river.

Concerning Drogheda itself I shall only say here that you go through most of it, crossing the bridge in order to get to the left or northern bank, and the road which leads out to the battlefield. About three miles out, you come sharply down a hill, and there on the right is King William's Glen, with a road leading down the narrow defile and across a bridge, while on the left an obelisk tells how King William came near to be shot while reconnoitring the Irish position from a spot close by.

The Irish were of course on the southern bank, and the bridge which gave its name to Oldbridge had been knocked away—leaving the river for a barrier. The Boyne water where so much was decided still flows swift and deep, and even though a canal has been taken off at this point, its breadth cannot be much less than forty yards. For on the spring day when I first went to visit Brugh an angler was busy with a big rod, and though he threw a fine line, he could not cover the whole water. Fortunate man to be fishing there ! the Boyne is famous among salmon rivers.

Just opposite Oldbridge are the woods of Townley Hall, where King William's sword is still cherished as a relic. Beyond them the road and river part company —the road making a sector to the great loop through which the Boyne curves on its seaward course before reaching the ford where Schomberg ventured and fell. One pushes on, up and up, for the river valley is enclosed by considerable eminences : and after about two miles a hillock is seen rising on the left hand of the road—flat-topped, steep-sided, circular—like a tumulus indeed, only, one would say, too big to have been constructed. Yet constructed it was, some two thousand years ago.

Turning in from the road you climb the steep side, and find in the centre of the mound—which covers about an acre—a quarry of loose stones. This is the result of injudicious excavation ; yet it shows here at Dowth, better than you will see it at New Grange, the nature of these structures, hills rather than mounds, consisting of loose stones heaped within a retaining curb of enormous blocks laid lengthwise in a circle. So far as we can guess, when the tomb was completed there was nothing to be seen but a vast heap of stones piled up and filling a ring. But the beholder knew also that somewhere far in the recesses of the cairn was a vaulted burying place, though possibly the access was no less secret than it was sixty or seventy years ago when antiquarians set to work upon excavating what was then, and had been for ages, a grass-grown mound. I say possibly,

for at New Grange the entrance shows regular architectural features, and it is difficult to believe that they were ever designedly hidden. But, on the other hand, a passage in the "Wars of the Gael and the Gall," describing the spoil taken by Malachy and Brian when they entered Dublin after defeating the Danes at Glenmama, accounts thus for the accumulation of treasure.

"There was not in concealment under ground in Erin nor in the various solitudes belonging to Fians and fairies anything that was not discovered by these foreign wonderful Danmarkians through paganism and idol worship."

If New Grange were then outwardly as it is to-day no witchcraft, or paganism, or idol worship would have been needed to find a way to the sacred place. At all events, here at Dowth the Danes were before the antiquarians, and when these latter did, by dint of much quarrying, strike the passage, it led only to a robbed nest. Yet the nest is well worth seeing, and when you have got from a neighbouring cottage the key to a wicket gate (put on by the careful Board of Works), you will enter a narrow passage between great upright blocks, each man-high, across which are laid transverse slabs of the same length. The passage is not ten yards long in all; but even a few paces travelled with difficulty by candlelight, in the absolute dank blackness down this narrow path of Cyclopean building, seem to lead one into earth's very bowels, towards the lair of some monstrous and uncanny habitant.

The passage ends in a vault, roughly circular, whose side walls are made, like those of the passage, by huge uprights, while the roof consists of other great slabs laid on them, and then on one another, overlapping inwards, till the last slab closes the aperture and completes the roof. It is built, in fact, as a child might build cards, but with units of structure so vast that their mere bulk gives it solidity.

Off the vault are three small recesses—tombs, not quite so long as modern graves, for the ancients buried their dead in a contracted position, or burned them. In the centre of the chamber is a huge shallow stone basin—used doubtless for some ceremony in connection with the burials. The stone is five feet across—a trifling block compared to the vast rocks out of which this underground dwelling is built. As one pries round the uncanniness of the thing presses in on the mind. How it was done, why it was done, for what dead men, by what living ones, in how remote an age?—these questions grow into a sort of nightmare; and I confess to a most unreasonable start when one of the two ladies in our party suddenly uttered a shriek. She was not prone to screaming, and she had seen—it appeared—nothing worse than a rat. Yet a rat that haunts the sepulchres of prehistoric kings is an eerie beast—and eerie, too, was a monstrous black spider of a kind unknown to me, which experts pronounced (for we captured it) to be a peculiarly fine specimen of a kind that inhabits only places of perpetual dark.

But let us proceed with serious archæology. From one of the recesses a small passage, also Cyclopean, for its floor consists of one long flag—leads into a small terminal chamber just able to hold a man when seated. For this offshoot from the natural plan of a passage leading to a vault it is not easy to account, except on a theory which I put forward with all diffidence. Obviously, the approach and the vault must have been erected before the cairn was piled over them, and the place of burial thus formed was a kind of glorified cromlech. Indeed, certain cromlechs may be practically regarded as covered ways leading to a closed chamber—all constructed of gigantic stones. Possibly the tomb stood thus for some while, and the passage leading to what is really a fourth sepulchral recess, or separate tomb, was then added to it. Yet possibly also the cairn may have been torn away to admit of the addition—since whatever these builders lacked in those days, they must have had plenty of man-power.

Elsewhere in the mound excavation has discovered other passages leading into other chambers, certainly of more recent date, for their walls are built up of small stones, and these may be simply underground storehouses or shelters such as are found in many of the old earthen forts. These, at all events, were probably burrowed into the cairn—and possibly by workers who did not know of the main Cyclopean passage and its vault.

What, then, is the story of this great palace of the

dead—this tremendous monument of power and veneration? More must be seen and described before this can be discussed, but the date can be fixed within fairly ascertainable limits. For the great stones in the passage and the vault are rudely ornamented with sculpture—work done before they were set in their places, as is proved by the fact that both here and at New Grange some of the decorated portions are virtually hidden, and some are in places where it would have been impossible to work on the stone. The ornament consists in rude spirals and wheel-crosses, sometimes, too, in representation of natural objects ; one leaf is carved, not incised, but standing out from the stone. Now whatever men wrought these sculptures must have had tools of bronze, or more probably of iron, to work with ; and iron only began to be used in Ireland about the Christian era.

The full development of this decoration must be seen at the greater tumulus, New Grange, some two miles further along the same road. But before one leaves Dowth it is well to take a view of the valley, for these old graves were all set on places of wide prospect, and there are pleasant flashes of the Boyne to be seen half-a-mile off, some hundred feet below you. Moreover, near by, to the south-east, is an old churchyard which contains a monument to a much more recent hero of the Gael than any who sleeps in the tumulus. In this parish was born John Boyle O'Reilly, the Fenian, who was sent to penal servitude in Australia, escaped thence to

America, and there made his name illustrious as a writer. His body lies in Boston—to-day almost an Irish city—where his great paper *The Pilot* exercised its influence honourably and chivalrously. Here at the place of his birth an inscription in Gaelic commemorates his qualities, and execrable sculpture dishonours the piety which erected the memorial. It is a strange thing to reflect that the art of stone carving, which we see in hopeful beginnings at New Grange and in strong mediæval development at Monasterboice, should have never come to a full flowering in Ireland. Yet the whole history of the country is one of arrested development, of genius finding adequate expression only outside of its native home. O'Reilly's epitaph was written thus in Boston : "Ireland gave him birth, England gave him exile, America gave him fame." And the thought which lies behind those words has a reference far wider than to the case of Boyle O'Reilly.

The banks along the road were starry with primroses on the first day when I made my way to New Grange. It stands even higher than Dowth, and the horse toiled up a steep gripe of a hill before we were on the level stretch, overshadowed on each side with elm trees, which skirts the great pasture in which the mound stands. On our left was the Boyne, much nearer us than at Dowth, and in the river meadows were two small tumuli, emerald green that spring day. What they hold is unknown, for

no one has opened them : but probably no treasure, for the Danes were here in 862 A.D., as is recorded in the annals of Ulster.

" The cave of Achadh Aldai and of Cnodhba, and the cave of the sepulchre of Boadan over Dubhad, and the cave of the wife of Gobhan were searched by the Danes—quod antea non perfectum est—on one occasion that the three kings, Amlaf, Ivar, and Auisle, were plundering the territory of Flann, the son of Conaing."

Cnodhba (Cnowba) is Knowth, another great tumulus about a mile from New Grange, which has never been entered in modern times ; the sepulchre of Boadan at Dubhad, Dooad, or Dowth, is what we have written of : the wife of Gobhan Saor (the Vulcan of Irish mythology) had her burying-place in the great rath on the south bank above Drogheda, which is shown in Mr. Thomson's drawing with a modern fort on top of the ancient garth. But the Cave of the Field of Aldai is doubtless what has yet to be described : namely, the great hillock of New Grange, overgrown with copse, which rises from the crest of the field to the right of the road, with four great standing stones erect like sentinels before it.

These stones, of which the largest is eight feet high above ground, and nearly twenty in girth, belonged to a circle of thirty-five, set at regular intervals about the cairn. The circumference of this circle would measure nearly a quarter of a mile. The cairn itself is, like that at Dowth, girdled by a

confining curb of blocks, eight or ten feet long, laid lengthways ; and on top of these is built a low wall of dry masonry. If the thing were merely a pile of loose stones we should wonder at the expense of labour : but it is more by far. Here we have, as we have not at Dowth, the true original entrance, which is rather above the level of the ground ; and under it is placed a great stone, its outer face wholly covered with a rich and deep cut design : the oldest example, probably, of that spiral ornament which the Celtic race in Ireland was to develop so profusely. Over the entrance is another carved stone, like a lintel, wrought with a kind of gate pattern in relief. The entrance itself consists of two upright blocks and one transverse leading into a passage more than twenty yards in length, which here also is formed by gigantic stones. In some places the superincumbent weight has listed them, and you must crawl now where formerly a tall man could walk ; but as you reach the end, the supports are upright and you edge your way without difficulty until suddenly space is about you, and your candle shows vaguely the domed roof of a vault almost twenty feet high. Here again are three recesses, and in two of them large oval stone basins—receptacles for what was left of the dead. In a sense, no mausoleum could be grander. With all our appliances to-day, what expense of labour and skill would be required to construct here on the hill-brow such a tomb? to drag from the quarry those monstrous blocks, to set in position first the

uprights, the long line of the passage, the circle for the walls of the chamber with inset recesses—every stone standing a man's height above the ground; and then, starting from the ground level, to lay flag on flag in a ring, each flag overlapping that below it, yet not so far but that it can support the next; until the ring, gradually narrowing, makes a dome inside and is closed by a single stone on top of all? Will anyone say how men with no instruments but levers and their muscles accomplished the task? There, however, it stands.

And inside, wreathing itself about this colossal architecture, is manifest the early decorative fancy, almost puerile in its task of carving laborious patches of ornament without any general decorative idea. Yet the designs are effective in themselves, good types for development, lozenge, chevron, and herring-bone or dog-tooth, but above and before all the coiled spiral.

When was it done, by whom and for whom? Irish tradition, as I have said, certainly assigned Brugh as a dwelling-place to Angus, the Apollo of Gaelic myth, most glorious among the heroes of the mysterious Tuatha de Danann who after their defeat by the Milesians withdrew from daylight into the recesses of the earth—and who are still there, fairy folk, the people of the *Sídhe*. Aldai was ancestor of the de Danann kings, and probably Irish legend with the advance of ages assigned the most venerable origin that it could think of for these mounds, and called the place Achadh Aldai, Aldai's Field.

Yet the place was almost certainly the royal burial place of Milesian kings. The *Seanchas na Roilic*, or ancient tract describing the graveyards of Ireland (incorporated in the *Dindsenchas* or general topography, attributed to Amergin, a bard of the sixth century), tells us that the kings of Tara were buried in Brugh ; and the name (in its genitive form) still cleaves to the place. The late Father O'Laverty (unlucky that I was, who neglected a chance of meeting the genial old scholar) was told by a woman, who knew nothing of the Irish tradition, that the field in which the mound stands was called Bro Park—that is, *Páirc Brogha,* the field of Brugh. And Mr. Westropp has come on the name in various old records of the townland, dating from the sixteenth century onward. There were no kings in Tara except the Milesians great enough to merit or obtain such a tomb ; and if Mr. MacNeill be right, the Milesians were only in Tara from about 100 A.D. onwards. Conn, the Hundred Fighter, was buried here, and Cairbre Liffechair, who destroyed the Fianna, to name two of those specially recorded in ancient verse. Yet curiously enough, tradition is most definite, not concerning the kings who were buried in Brugh, but concerning the king who refused to be buried there.

Cormac MacArt, who came to the throne in 254 A.D., was the wisest of Ireland's kings in the early day. Under him flourished the great military organisation called the Fianna or Braves, whose

leader, Finn MacCumhail, with his warriors has filled a whole realm of Gaelic legend. Cormac himself, though he fought many battles, was more illustrious by arts of peace; and a great body of tradition assigns to him the authorship of three great works. Two of them have come down to us in a form which at all events was attributed to Cormac's authorship so long as a thousand years ago. These are the text of the Brehon laws, which were the code of Ireland, and the *Teagasc Riogh*, or Instruction for a King, written, as the Four Masters say, "to preserve manners, morals, and government in the kingdom."

It is also stated that Cormac made a great advance in the arts of life, for he first established a watermill in Ireland. This invention had come to the Roman world in the last days of the Republic, and was no doubt diffused through Britain by Roman settlement; and with the Roman world Cormac was certainly acquainted, since the Annals of Tighearnach state that he spent three years abroad with his fleet. For although, as we have said, the early Irish were not a maritime people, and probably depended first on the Phœnicians and later on the Danes for their commerce, they had ships of war, and in the fourth and fifth centuries at least made free use of them in piratical warfare.

A guess of modern writers connects this journeying of Cormac's with the recorded fact, not accounted for in Irish annals, that he was a Christian before

Christianity was preached by Patrick: Christianity, according to the annalists, earned him his death. Here is how the Four Masters tell the story, in their entry for the year A.D. 266:—

"Cormac, the son of Art, the son of Con, after having been forty years in the Government of Ireland, died at Cletty, the bone of a salmon having stuck in his throat, through the Sheevra, whom Mailgenn the druid induced to attack him, after Cormac had turned from the druids to the adoration of God; wherefore a demon attacked him at the instigation of the druids and gave him a painful death."

Here now is the further detail which connects Cormac with the story of Brugh na Boinne: it is taken from the *Seanchas na Roilic*:

"And Cormac told his people not to bury him at Brugh (because it was a cemetery of idolators), for he did not worship the same God as any of those interred at Brugh, but to bury him at Ros-na-righ with his face to the East. He afterwards died, and his servants of trust held a council and came to the resolution of burying him at Brugh, the place where the kings of Tara (his predecessors) were buried. The body of the king was afterwards thrice raised to be carried to Brugh, but the Boyne swelled up thrice so that they could not come; so they observed that it was violating the judgment of a prince to break through this testament of the king, and they afterwards dug his grave at Ros-na-righ as he himself had ordered."

So the story came down in Irish, modified here and there through the ages, until finally a man of genius took it in hand, and made of it in English what I trust the most fanatic Gael of us all will claim for a glory of Irish literature. Samuel Ferguson's "Burial of King Cormac" tells how Cormac disowned "Crom

Cruach and his sub-gods twelve," and how, when the druids heard his saying,

> 'They loosed their curse against the king,
> They cursed him in his flesh and bones;
> And daily in their mystic ring
> They turned the maledictive stones.'

The poet tells then of Cormac's death, his dying injunction, and the debate over his bier held by the servants. But let him speak uninterrupted:

> 'Dead Cormac on his bier they laid—
> "He reign'd a king for forty years;
> And shame it were," his captains said,
> "He lay not with his royal peers.
>
> "His grandsire, Hundred-Battle, sleeps
> Serene in Brugh; and all around
> Dead kings in stone sepulchral keeps
> Protect the sacred burial ground.
>
> "What though a dying man should rave
> Of changes o'er the Eastern sea?
> In Brugh of Boyne shall be his grave,
> And not in noteless Rosnaree."
>
> Then northward forth they bore the bier,
> And down from Sletty side they drew,
> With horsemen and with charioteer
> To cross the fords of Boyne to Brugh.
>
> There came a breath of finer air,
> That touched the Boyne with ruffling wings;
> It stirred him in his sedgy lair
> And in his mossy moorland springs.
>
> And as the burial train came down
> With dirge and savage dolorous shows,

Across their pathway, broad and brown,
The deep, full-hearted river rose;

From bank to bank through all his fords,
'Neath blackening squalls he swelled and boiled,
And thrice the wondering Gentile lords
Essayed to cross, and thrice recoiled.

Then forth stepped grey-haired warriors four;
They said: "Through angrier floods than these
On linked shields once our king we bore
From Dread-spear and the hosts of Deece.

And long as loyal will holds good,
And limbs respond with helpful thews,
Nor flood, nor fiend within the flood,
Shall bar him of his burial dues."

With slanted necks they stooped to lift;
They heaved him up to neck and chin;
And, pair and pair, with footsteps swift,
Locked arm and shoulder, bore him in.

'Twas brave to see them leave the shore;
To mark the deepening surges rise,
And fall subdued in foam before
The tension of their striding thighs.

'Twas brave, when now a spear-cast out
Breast-high the battling surges ran;
For weight was great, and limbs were stout,
And loyal man put trust in man.

But ere they reached the middle deep,
Nor steadying weight of clay they bore,
Nor strain of sinewy limbs could keep
Their feet beneath the swerving four.

And now they slide, and now they swim,
And now, amid the blackening squall,
Grey locks afloat, with clutchings grim,
They plunge around the floating pall;

While as a youth with practised spear
Through justling crowds bears off the ring,
Boyne from their shoulders caught the bier
And proudly bore away the king.

At morning on the grassy marge
Of Rosnaree, the corpse was found ;
And shepherds at their early charge
Entombed it in the peaceful ground.

A tranquil spot—a hopeful sound
Comes from the ever youthful stream,
And still on daisied mead and mound
The dawn delays with tenderer beam.

Round Cormac spring renews her buds ;
In march perpetual by his side,
Down come the earth-fresh April floods,
And up the sea-fresh salmon glide.

And life and time rejoicing run
From age to age their wonted way ;
But still he waits the risen Sun,
For still 'tis only dawning Day.'

There, ladies and gentlemen, you who do not know the work of Samuel Ferguson, there is poetry for you ; sinewy stuff, a man's work ; with hints in it, perhaps, of contemporary English influences (notably in the beautiful verse about the "breath of finer air") and hints of the English eighteenth century writers in its close, so like Collins in its cadences ; yet, in its essential quality, absolutely and unchallengeably his own, and in the great manner :

"With slanted necks they stooped to lift,
They heaved him up to neck and chin."

So the great poets, and they only, write, in terse phrases that give the full physical realisation of action ; sculpturing, as it were, in verse. How like sculpture is that phrase, " the tension of their striding thighs." And then, emerging from the insistent detail of the struggle, listen to the triumphant lift in the verse which tells of victory—the easy metaphor that gives a pause as if for indrawn breath, before we come to the swelling culmination :

> " Boyne from their shoulders caught the bier,
> And proudly bore away the king."

" A tranquil spot." It is, and a beautiful. Brugh na Boinne, the imperishable mound of old pagan monarchs, looks down from its high hill-shoulder on to the curve of the river and Cormac's unmarked resting-place, somewhere on the further bank. But Rosnaree (the name loses its pure magic when you translate it, The King's Point) is only one spot, beautiful, indeed, yet not specially conspicuous, in the most glorious range of river landscape that is known to me. Above Navan the Boyne is sedgy and weed-choked ; but if you follow the tow-path down from Navan, between canal and river, you will find yourself heaping scorn on the Thames. Here are wide spaces of smooth water, with steep wooded banks beyond them—banks ambered, when I saw them last, with all the tones of autumn. But (since Boyne is a famous salmon stream, and way must be

made for the running fish), here are no high lock-gates damming back the water in long sluggish flats. Everywhere the run is brisk, and constantly broken by low weirs, under which long races swirl and bubble in a way to tantalise every angler, and delight even those who do not know the true charm of a salmon pool. When I came in sight of Dunmoe Castle, a ruined Norman keep of the sixteenth cen-

Rosnaree.

tury, perched high on a bare grassy cliff above one of these lashers, it seemed that here was surely the finest point of all ; but after I had passed Stackallen bridge, and was travelling now down the left bank, I learnt my error. Under the woods of Stackallen House, canal and river merge into one broad stream, closely pent by precipitous banks, variously

wooded. Below the lock, where the canal rejoins the main water, a pool begins, stretching some two hundred yards straight down, until it is closed by a cliff of ochre-tinted rock, bold and bare among the foliage. So swift is the rush from the lasher, so far does it swirl down into this reach, that the water has no look of dulness; it is a pool, not a stretch. I walked on quickly, eager to see what lay round the sharp bend, and suddenly towards me there swung round the cliff a barge, brightly painted. The line of its sides, the fan-shaped curve of the wave spreading outwards and backwards, as the craft drew towards me, had a beauty in that setting that only sight could realise. If any spot of the world is enchanted, it must be that water; and as you round the cliff it is more beautiful still. For there, under Beaupark House, is a cliff answering that on the Stackallen bank, and a precipitous lawn beside it; and the river, bending south here at right angles, then breaking out again, stately and splendid, on its old line due east, has movement and stillness all in one; it is a sliding, swirling mirror for banks which well deserve such a glass to echo their perfection.

A friend of mine told me, in a far-off part of Ireland, that he had found on the Boyne the Fianna's bathing-place. When I first saw the cliff below the lock I thought I knew his discovery; when I turned the corner and saw the round pool below Beaupark I was sure of it. White limbs of heroes surely flashed and sported in that lucid peril.

Beyond Beaupark, but on the left bank of the river, one reaches the grounds of Slane Castle, and behind it rises the hill of Slane, on the top of which St. Patrick on that famous Easter-Eve lighted his Paschal fire, which was seen by the Pagan king and Druids in Tara. Here was the monastery too, of which no trace remains to-day, yet which was once so famous that in the middle of the seventh century Dagobert II., heir to the throne of France, was sent thither to be educated in the great college, so close to the palace of the Ardrigh.

Rosnaree, where Cormac found his resting-place, is a good deal further down-stream, beyond Slane Castle and the bridge of Slane, where William's right wing crossed. Slane is fully six miles above Oldbridge, where the obelisk marks the actual field of battle. And Mr. Thomson's sketch, drawn from the right bank, two or three hundred yards below Oldbridge, shows, so far as I can make out, the most interesting ford of all. For just where the water breaks over a shallow, above the upper island whose willow-trees are in the middle distance of the picture, Schomberg led his men into the ford, and was shot down in mid-stream, ending gloriously a long career of honour.

William himself crossed nearly a mile lower, below the islands, where even in low water fording would still be difficult. The fiercest fighting must have been from the village of Oldbridge, just behind where the sketch was made, to the rise of the hill above the lower ford of William's crossing.

I shall not dwell on the history of the battle, though nothing in it should be painful to any reader, except indeed to champions of the Stuarts. "Change Kings," said Sarsfield, "and we will fight it over again." Yet had William been on the south bank with some 23,000 men, ill-armed and inexperienced, absolutely without artillery; had James been on the north with an army of 36,000, highly trained and well equipped, backed by a great park of guns; William would certainly have made a better fight of it, but the result could scarcely have been other than it was. The turning movement was too completely successful. Before the battle began William had 10,000 men at least across the bridge at Slane, menacing James's left wing and his line of retreat from a distance of only three or four miles.

In truth, if William had been in James's place it is likely there would have been no battle of the Boyne at all. Not to fight would have been wisdom: to fight and run away was folly as well as cowardice. And the worst of all was to detail off Sarsfield, the best fighting leader on the Irish side, for no other purpose than to command the bodyguard of a general who did not intend to risk himself in action.

However, fought the battle was, and to this day staunch Protestants in the north procure bottles filled with the Boyne water to baptise their babies. They do well in a sense, for the cause which won at the Boyne was the cause of Protestant ascendancy; and what that meant was plainly defined by the penal laws against Catholics. The cause which lost, on

the other hand, was the cause of those who wished to undo the Cromwellian settlement which Mr. Lecky has described in a few summary phrases.

"The worship which was that of almost the whole native population was absolutely suppressed. . . . All, or almost all, the land of the Irish in the three largest and richest provinces was confiscated and divided amongst those adventurers who had lent money to the Parliament, and among the Puritan soldiers, whose pay was greatly in arrear."

This simple arrangement, inaugurated by Cromwell, was, as regards the land, confirmed in the main by the English Acts of Settlement and Explanation under Charles II. The Irish Parliament, when James came to the throne, set itself to undo all this. Freedom of religion was to be permitted; tithes were to go to the pastors of those who paid the tithes. But land which was held under a title derived from Cromwell's confiscation was to be re-confiscated for the adherents of James. The victory at the Boyne upheld the Cromwellian dispensation, and for that reason, as the old balladmonger sings:

"The Protestants of Drogheda
Had reason to be thankful
That they were not to bondage brought—
They being but a handful."

On the contrary, by the assistance of William and his armies, they, "being but a handful," were established and maintained on the necks of the Irish population, whom they brought into as complete a bondage as the world has ever seen.

Cromwell's work began at Drogheda, and made it

plain from the first that his object was a war of proscription and extermination. Because the garrison resisted, they were massacred by his orders to the last man: nor were the non-combatants spared. There had been many sieges in the Civil War in England, but no such termination had been seen at any one of them. Such a deed would sink deep into memory if it stood alone; but it was only the prelude to a system under which many hundreds of the Irish were by Cromwell's orders sold into slavery in the Indies, while at home the religion of the people was proscribed, and their lands were taken from them. If the nation had forgotten this it would have ceased to be a nation; the very currents of its life beat up against such oppression. At the Boyne, and in the other battles which followed, a fierce spasmodic effort was made to shake off the servitude; but under William and Mary the tying-up was renewed and completed. From that day to this the history of Ireland has been the history of continuous struggles to break loose bit by bit from the trammels: and we, in the last few years, have seen what is virtually the rescinding of a land system which dates from Cromwell and William—from Drogheda and from the Boyne.

These are harsh memories, but at the Boyne there is no evading them. Yet my recollection of Drogheda is chiefly of mere beauty. I had walked down from the battle-field, and, looking about me, realised for the first time that the town had been walled on both

sides of the river, and that Cromwell's storming was of the wall on the southern bank. That, doubtless, is why in the northern town the noble St. Lawrence's Gate, with its two lofty towers, stands intact to-day : a singular relic of fortification as it was understood under Queen Elizabeth. But the beauty of the evening tempted me away from antiquarian exploration to the wharf side. Looking up the river, toward the sunset, all was a riot of colour : sea-wards in the gloaming, the great railway viaduct was faint like a spider's web against the sky. In that light, every spire looked beautiful—and the final defeat of Cromwell's cause is strangely evident in the multitude of Catholic places of worship. One church in particular, St. Mary's, on the southern bank charmed me by its proportion and its well-placed ornament. Only, when one drew near, the eye was affected by a sense of deadness. It craved what is lacking in almost all modern Catholic churches—life, the handiwork of the artificer. If we could only give back to modern Ireland—so zealous, so profuse in church building, so eager to lavish of the best upon a religion all the more loved because of the generations of sacrifice which religious consistency has entailed —if we could only give them back the craftsmen whose work, where it has escaped mutilation, mocks the incompetence of to-day ! If we could recover for a few years the men who wrought the crosses at Monasterboice, or those great architects who planned and executed the beautiful buildings of Mellifont !

No account of the Boyne valley would be even perfunctory which omitted to tell of these two great monasteries, and no review of Irish history would be intelligent which did not give at least some idea of the religious life of which they are, perhaps, the most typical monuments. They stand not precisely in the valley itself, but on the long slope of high ground rising northward, down which William marched his army in the last days of June, 1690; and King William's Glen with its beautiful wooded pass (down which the bulk of the Dutchman's army debouched on the ford) will lead you on your way. There is a mile or so of ascent, and at the top you find a sign-post (how rare in Ireland and how welcome !) pointing to Mellifont. The name is noteworthy. Those who settled here in the valley of the Mattock were mainly foreign monks, speaking the common tongue of Latin Christianity; and they called their 'bee-loud glade' by a Latin name—'Honey fountain.' Not much is left of their great monastery, yet more than enough remains to show that these builders were working after a fashion wholly other than that of the native Irish, and using a more elaborate and developed art. Here, roughly, is the story.

In 1139 St. Malachy O'Morgair, Archbishop of Armagh, journeyed to Rome, praying the Pope to grant two palliums, or archiepiscopal stoles, for the Irish Church: and on his way he sojourned at Clairvaux with St. Bernard, then probably the greatest religious force in Europe, whose influence

was not only personal but exerted through the famous Cistercian order, newly springing into power. Close friendship sprang up between the two saints (how close, St. Bernard's writings testify), and Malachy left certain of his followers to be trained in the Cistercian rule. Five years later these men, along with some foreign monks among whom was one "Brother Robert, skilled in the art of building," came to Ireland and founded Mellifont—being helped by a grant in land and money from Donough O'Carroll, King of Oirgialla or Oriel, which then embraced the present counties of Armagh, Monaghan, and Louth. So was introduced into Ireland the twelfth century style of building—an immense advance on anything that had existed before.

It seems clear that up to that date stone masonry was little used by the Irish for dwelling places or fortification. Forts were of earth or loose stone; houses of wattle and plaster, or of timber. Life was lived greatly in the open. But this does not mean that the mason's art and the stoneworker's were not known. The round towers, all of them built before a stone of Mellifont was laid, attest a rare skill: and probably ever since the days of Patrick churches had been built of mortared work. How skilful Irish architects and masons had come to be within their own limitations is sufficiently proved by Cormac's chapel at Cashel: but Irish buildings, though superb in their decoration, were strangely unambitious in scope and in plan. The church had got no further

than a division into nave and chancel; and it was never of any considerable size. Realising all this, one will understand how great a work Mellifont must have seemed, with its cruciform church, containing a semi-circular chapel in each transept (such as Brother Robert had known and perhaps had built at Clairvaux); with its cloisters, its chapter house, its heavy gate tower, and the beautiful octagon of its Baptistery whose rich and gracious ornament can still be guessed at from what fragments remain. It was a great thing in Ireland, and a new one. By its close ties with the continent of Europe it stood aptly for the new influences which were drawing the Christians of Ireland into fuller harmony with the ecumenical rule and discipline of the papacy. It was something less insular, more cosmopolitan, than the old centres of Irish religion had been: and when the Normans conquered Ireland they naturally regarded establishments like Mellifont as centres almost of their own race. Yet it must be said that in this case also the new became amalgamated with the old, *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*; and in 1322 it was decided that no man of English descent should be admitted among the monks of Mellifont.

If Mellifont represents here in the Boyne valley (where all things are represented) the first incoming of a peaceful invasion, the advent of a stricter ecclesiastical discipline, and a more developed civilisation than had existed in Ireland before,

Monasterboice, on the other hand, is a superb type of the absolutely Irish religious communities. It was founded in the sixth century by St. Buithe or Bœtius, whose name it preserves (for Monasterboice is *Mainistir Buithe*, the Abbey of Bœtius); and for more than five hundred years it was one of the great seats of purely Irish literature and learning. Here where it stands, some three miles north-east of Mellifont, are all the characteristic features of one of the old Irish monasteries. Here is the great *cloig-theach* or bell-tower, one of the hundred scattered through Ireland, so strongly built that many of them still remain almost intact, though ten centuries may have gone by since their erection. This one rises 110 feet in height, but its top has been shattered—probably since the fire which destroyed it in 1097, and destroyed with it "several books and valuables"—some book, perhaps, like that of Kells, some crozier like the famous jewel of Cong. Under this great pillar the monastic buildings crouched, huddled together. The dwelling places, of course, are gone, leaving no more trace on the ground than if tents had been pitched there; and this very impermanence of the actual dwellings testifies to the nature of Irish monastic communities—mere casual groups of individuals, attracted to one place by the fame of some saint or scholar, but bound by no common rule. But churches, here as elsewhere, remain to be seen. The larger of the two is only forty-five feet long, and is early work, though it has reached the stage of

development when chancel is marked off from nave by a round arch. The other ruin, still smaller, is said to be of the thirteenth century, and if so it must have looked mean indeed beside the contemporary splendours of Mellifont. But neither Mellifont nor any community of Norman foundation would match the special glory of Monasterboice—the two huge crosses of richly sculptured stone.

The greater of them stands twenty-seven feet high, and three stones make up the whole of it. One of them, the cap of the Cross, represents in itself a church of the ancient Irish type with high pitched roof, such as may be seen at Killaloe—or, nearer hand, at Kells. The arms of the cross and the ring which embraces them are sculptured in panels, as is also the long slender shaft, each panel figuring some scene of Scripture history. Weather and mutilation have defaced the carving so that the story is not easily deciphered: but the richness of all this high embossed stonework loses little by its lack of definition. Yet the second and lesser cross of Muiredach has even greater interest, for here the sculpture with its elaborate tracery and its representation of man and beast is hardly impaired. The compartments and the figures are larger, and we see in them a curious historical document; for here are Irish clerics and Irish warriors figured in the habit of their time—clerics mustachioed as bravely as the warriors! And the time itself is indicated, within

certain limits of conjecture, by an inscription which read :

OR DO MUIREDACH LES INDERNAD IN CHROSSA

"Pray for Muiredach, by whom the Cross was made."

And since the annals record two Abbots Muiredach, of whom one died in 844 and the other in 924, we have to choose between the ninth century and the tenth for the date of this monument.

A general notion of the decorative value of the work may be gathered from Mr. Thomson's sketch of the cross at Clonmacnoise. But the special interest of Muiredach's Cross is that here sculpture seems far advanced on its way to a free artistic treatment of the figure : here we find the Irish genius displaying itself not only in the formal perfection of inlaced design, but in the nobler effort to render life and movement. The panels which represent such subjects as the expulsion of man from Eden have been rightly praised for their simple dramatic power : while their rudeness detracts in no way from the beauty of the whole, the rich intricacy of light and shade over the embossed surface.

Scholars flourished, here as elsewhere, beside the artists. Flann of the Monastery, who died in 1056, is recorded by the Four Masters as "paragon of the Irish in history, poetry, eloquence and literature." But this is not the place to expound upon this topic, which can be treated more fully in my chapter on Clonmacnoise.

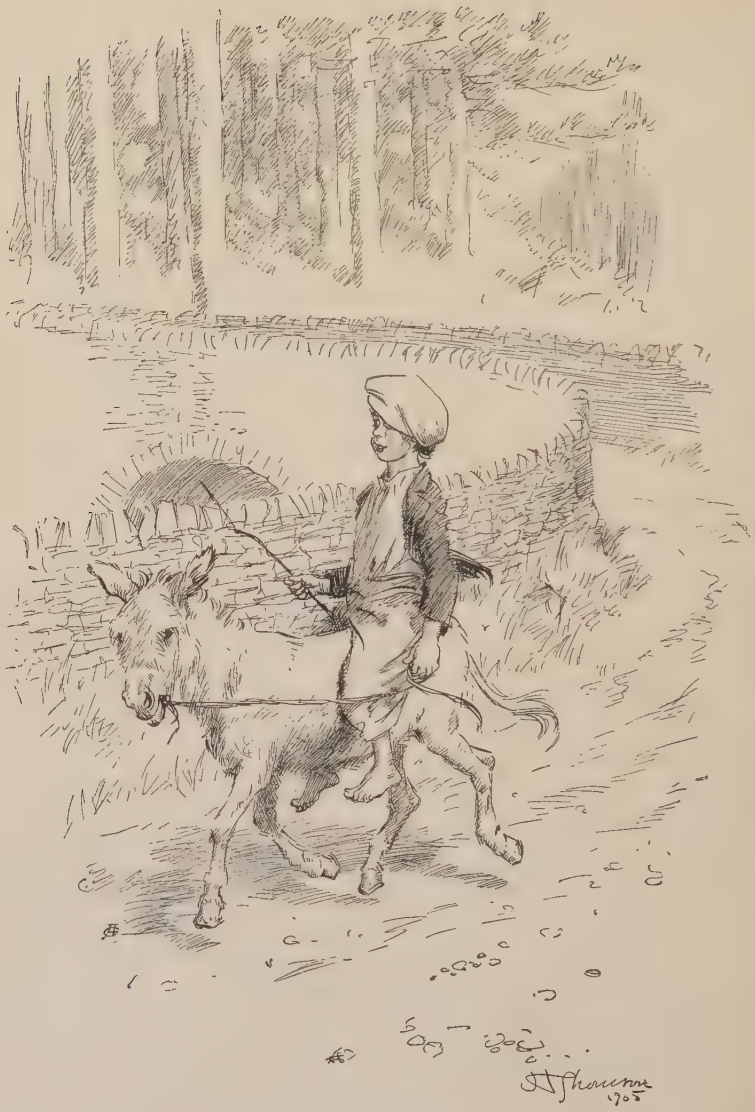
I have skimmed now over the associations which glorify the lower valley of the Boyne: the story of Tara needs a chapter to itself. One word more is needed—of counsel to whoever visits Monasterboice. Follow the road a few hundred yards past the ruins, till you crest the hill and see northward; for here you shall find spread out before you a truly glorious view of the central plain. South of you is the Boyne valley, and probably you will see, thirty miles off in the distance, the mountains of Dublin and Wicklow, beyond the rich region of Bregia and the plain of Fingal. But the beauty of the view is northward and westward. All along your right on the east the sea sweeps, and across the north are mountains; the Carlingford hills rising near Dundalk, and beyond and behind them the great mass of the Mourne mountains, with sea embayed among their feet, and here and there a white town shining. When I saw it last, that landscape seemed enchanted; shadows lay on the bold outlines of Slieve Gullion, the detached mountain which stands like an outpost to the west of the main range. Slieve Donard was only a mist, but while I watched, again and again a sudden shaft of sunshine would bring some mass of it into solid relief. Those mountains for centuries marked the limit of the English Pale: Dundalk, lying at the hither end of the great pass which is called the Gap of the North, was the frontier town; and from near Dundalk William's army followed James through

Ardee to the Boyne. From this hill its march could have been watched for two days.

Yet as I looked my thought was not of history, but of the beauty that lay before me, the glory of blue sea, the glory of mountains, distant enough to be blue, not too distant to be impressive; and a greater glory still, the characteristic beauty of central Ireland, that long expanse of undulating plain, the 'coloured counties' spread out before me, infinitely diversified with enclosing hedges, which, merging into indistinctness in the distance, still gave a chequered sheen to the greenness, growing more and more crystalline and transparent, like the tints of coloured glass, as the plain receded northwards and west, away and away to the limit of vision, far past the mountains—more beautiful even than they.

That indeed was Ireland—far more truly and characteristically Irish than any moorland of the West. A country rich in produce, much beloved, full of kindly country people; a country full of history—for not the Dutchman only marched his army there, but Englishman and Norman too, a hundred times, and the chiefs of the Gael a thousand, since the day when Maeve led her Connaught host on the quest for the Bull of Cuailgne,—whose pasturage was over there by Dundalk, somewhere in the mountainous district of Omeath—and since Cuchulain, harassing Maeve's armies single-handed, slew his comrade Ferdia in desperate battle midway across the plain at the Ford which still keeps the

vanquished in remembrance—*Ath Fhirdiadh*, Ferdia's Ford, now Athardee, or Ardee. Such are the associations with which the plain is peopled. And when, standing on the high brink, as it were, of the Boyne valley, you look out over Ireland with a mind coloured by such memories, enjoyment of the landscape will grow keener, and will leave, I think, more seed of pleasure behind it than is to be gathered by those who see merely what the outward eye can show them.



A Cavalier of Cong.

CHAPTER III

CONG, TUAM, AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY—THE FIRBOLGS

The Boyne monuments, though of such antiquity that they seem coëval with the very rocks and hills, stand in reality for an end, not a beginning. They associate themselves with the culmination of pagan power, almost with the era which St. Patrick found existing in the fifth century. Beyond these associations rise dim shapes of legendary persons and battles, remote and vague, yet linked to certain definite places in Ireland. And nowhere are the vestiges of this prehistoric past more traceable than about the beautiful little village of Cong, and thence across the horse-breeding plain which skirts the east shore of Lough Corrib, back to the cathedral city of Tuam. The whole region is fairy haunted; on Knockmagh ("The Hill of the Plain"), which, rising some few hundred feet out of that level commands a strangely sweeping view, Finvarra, king of the fairies, keeps his court. No wonder! For if, as some of my friends hold, what we call fairies are beings of a different and more ancient race who dwell about this

earth, and of whom we humans are most easily aware in places where the ancient way of life has been little disturbed, and where old centres of fierce emotion still radiate something that can be felt, unobscured by the pressing in of new vitality, there is hardly a tract in Ireland more primitive in its manners and its beliefs, hardly a district more unaltered.[1] Or if, as the educated crowd believes, imagination readily invents shapes to people very ancient ruins, and is busy about dwelling-places of the forgotten dead, here we have cairns and tombs and dwellings that might well be tombs, which, standing almost as they were at first created, tempt the dullest fancy to bring back life into what is so unchanged and so little understood, so palpable yet so ghostly.

The whole country is dotted over with rath and liss, cahir and cairn. East of Tuam, where the soil is good, these early builders fenced themselves in with a roughly circular embankment, digging out a ditch and throwing up a mound. That was a rath. But where stone abounded to hand, they piled stones in a ring for a simple breastwork, and such forts are cahirs. These things are through all Ireland in thousands, protected partly by superstitious fears. But here,

[1] Half way between Knockmagh and Galway lives Diarmuid ua h-Urnaighe (Dermod Hurney), famous among shanachies and reciters of verse in the West, not only for the mass of literature which his memory preserves, but for the beauty and dignity of his declamation. His picture adorns the first chapter of this book.

about the Corrib, there is frequently found what completes our picture of that old life, a place of refuge or shelter inside the rath or cahir itself, tunnelled far under the ground. Within a few miles of Tuam fifteen of these caves, or souterrains (as archæologists call them), have been discovered. Somewhere in the enclosure or garth of the rath a small opening leads into a chamber perhaps twenty feet long, formed by walls of dry masonry with slabs laid transversely for a roofing. From this, at an angle, through a small opening, another passage leads into another chamber; but the entrance is a trap. It is blocked to about half a man's height by a platform constructed in the inner chamber so that one entering must scramble up—his head coming first and his arms cramped in the hole. If a friend, he emerged on the platform and was helped by rude steps to descend into the inner apartment; if an enemy—why, there was someone waiting on the platform to knock him handily on the head.

There is no reasonable doubt that these chambers—which are found widely distributed in Ireland, but rarely so numerous as in this district—were places of shelter for the living, just as it is certain that in Brugh na Boinne we have very similar structures, but on an ampler scale, erected for the abode of the dead. And it seems likely that the builders of those great monuments, living themselves in houses of some perishable material, timber or wattled osier, made for their dead glorified copies of the safest and strongest

fastnesses they knew—adding a grandeur by the vast bulk of the stones they used. Dowth and New Grange are only the final development of a class of sepulchral monument of which conspicuous examples exist in the Corrib region.

The hill of Knockmagh, over the demesne of Castle Hacket, is crowned with a cairn—under which, legend says, lies Ceasair, one of the chieftainesses who accompanied the first colony to Ireland—forty days before the flood! If so she sleeps undisturbed, for the cairn is intact. But on a lower shoulder of the hill, near the road from Tuam to Cong, is another cairn, and here, not long ago, men were quarrying stone when suddenly they disclosed a grave. In the rough heap was a cist, formed by a level slab below and a level slab above it supported by upright stones. What they did, was to run away. Some time later a courageous man opened the cist and found it to contain a number of bones, and a small urn of earthenware, golden-brown in colour and delicately traced with patterns. Such an urn was in Ferguson's mind when he wrote:

> "A cup of bodkin-pencilled clay
> Holds Oscar; mighty heart and limb,
> One handful now of ashes grey."

But my friend at Tuam, into whose possession this particular relic has come (by means which all antiquarians would appreciate and justify), believes that it contained not ashes but food for the dead warrior who earned so conspicuous a tomb. Labour was not

spared, for the heavy slab covering the cist was of red sandstone, and must have been fetched a matter of fifty miles; and here is a resemblance with New Grange, for one of the great stone basins there is of granite, and must have been fetched from Wicklow—or some place even more distant. But the point to which attention should be called is that here we have the first idea out of which sprang the Boyne monuments—and the others like them on the Lough Crew hills in Meath. The sepulchral chamber of large slabs of rock covered over by a pile of loose stones was doubtless familiar before men thought of building a house and gateway for the dead, and then heaping the cairn over this gigantic grave.

Who the hero was whose tomb stood over against Ceasair's, and whose urn Dr. Costello has conveyed into safe keeping, no one can tell us. It is otherwise with the greater cairns at Cong: for near by there was fought the great battle of Moytura, which lasted four days, and surged across the whole neck of land which divides the northern shore of Corrib from the southern of Lough Mask. The story of that fight is recounted to us almost as precisely as any battle in the Iliad, and in the same vein. Giants and magicians took their part in it, and things were done beyond mortal power to do to-day. But, because marvels are told in the Iliad, does anyone doubt now that Troy stood and Troy fell? The story of the battle of Moytura is perhaps the remotest thing in Irish history that comes down to us circumstan-

tially described ; and there is no reason to doubt that it took place, or that it was, as it is represented to have been, a struggle between contending races for the mastery of Ireland.

Tradition tells of five invasions or colonisations of Eire, and traces them all back to an origin in the Mediterranean. Parthalon and Nemed, who led the first two colonies, are only shadowy names. Part of the Nemedian colony went back to the Mediterranean and served there as slaves—set to carry earth in wallets from plains to enrich the hill-slopes with vineyards. So, we are told, they got their name of the 'Firbolgs'—men of the leathern sack.

Wearying of their task, the Firbolgs came back to Ireland and they possessed the land : a low-statured, dark-skinned, dark-eyed people. Forty years later, according to the annals, came a new body of invaders, the Tuatha de Danann. They also were of Nemedian stock, but had settled in Attica (whereas the Firbolgs went to Thrace), and had learnt magic from the Greeks till they eclipsed their teachers. When Syria overran Greece they fled, and settled in Scandinavia. Here possibly is some track of historic truth, some echo of the Persian wars ; and the Tuatha de Danann should be allied to Homer's Danai. But to Ireland they came from the north : a tall, fair, blue-eyed race of magicians, whom the wind wafted over the seas by enchantment, till they settled on the Connaught mountains in the likeness of a blue mist. They demanded from the Firbolgs a share of Ireland, and

when it was refused, they fought. Sir William Wilde (who built for himself Moytura House on that part of the battlefield which looks over Corrib) holds that Nuad, leader of the de Danann army, pitched his camp on Ben Levi (vulgarly called Mount Gable), the flat-topped mountain which pushes in between Mask and Corrib, and that Eochy, King of the Firbolgs, rested with his power on Knockmagh.

It is not for me to contend either with or for an archæologist. Wilde's identification of places in the battle rested on his own interpretation of the story. Tradition appears in his day to have been as vague as now—relating the monuments merely to some great fight. But about the existence of the monuments there is no question. One stands—Mr. Thomson has drawn it—a mile or two from Cong on the high road to Cross : another five miles further west rears up its bulk above the old road leading to Ballinrobe. This latter cairn, from which we looked across Lough Mask and saw all the hollows of the threatening hills in the Joyce country filled with streaming vapour, phantasmally sunlit, as if cloudy hosts of the de Dananns were still resting there, embattled, to descend on the plain, marks the final defeat of the Firbolgs. Here, they say, Eochy fell, slaying his three slayers : and victory rested with the de Dananns. Yet the cairn is unexplored, though much pulled about by rabbit-hunters. In the great cairn near Moytura House, some of these sportsmen told me, a rabbit will often disappear absolutely,

having found a pass through the loose-piled stones into the recesses of the still unopened cave. One only of these cairns was opened, and of that I leave Wilde to tell the story.

The fight lasted five days in all, and on the first day victory lay with the Firbolgs: the cairn of Ballymagibbon is identified by Wilde with that which was erected under King Eochy's eyes for a

Ballymagibbon Cairn.

memorial of that triumph, each man of his host bringing a stone and the head of an enemy.

"Next morning before the second day's fight began, King Eochy, unattended, went down into a certain well to perform his ablutions, and while there observed three of the enemy overhead. Eochy was saved by one of his own men who slew the three, but died immediately from his wounds on an adjoining

hillock. The Firbolgs, coming up to look after their king, then and there interred the hero who so bravely defended him; and each taking a stone in his hand, erected over him a monumental cairn. The well is not named in the ancient account of the battle; but the little hill on which the conflict took place is called *Tulach an Tríúr*, the Hill of the Three, and the monument, *Carn an Aonfhir*, the Cairn of the One Man. And there" (continues Wilde in the true spirit of Jonathan Oldbuck) "they both remain to the present day—the deep well, now called *Meeneen Uisge*, in a chasm of the limestone rock through which the floods of Mask percolate into Lough Corrib—the only drop of water that is to be found in the neighbourhood, and so deep under the surface that the king must have looked upwards to see his enemies 'overhead.' Immediately adjoining it on the south-east stands the hillock, crowned with a circle of standing stones, 176 feet in circumference, in the centre of which are the remains of the cairn: and the monument is still called *Carn Meeneen Uisge*."

This cairn was opened under Wilde's directions; the enthusiastic antiquary (father of a famous and most unlucky son) standing over the workers and exhorting them with recitals of the story, not in vain. For at last there was disclosed a small cist containing an urn in which were the incinerated remains of human bones, which had once, as Wilde believed, perhaps not without warrant, supported the bones of King Eochy's brave defender.

I must be candid about this cairn. The name of *Meeneen Uisge* did not survive in the memory of those whom I spoke with about the cairn of Ballymagibbon. But I am assured since that some of the older people still give this name to one of the underground rivers ; and if so, the cairn with its ring of stones should be easily identified by some one who is more willing to spare time from his fishing than was the unworthy topographer who hereby makes his confession. I did explore another cairn, at some expense of trouble, but it was the wrong one. It is easy to go wrong in the multitude of these monuments of that great battle.

The De Dananns conquered, but the Firbolgs were by no means blotted out : they are by far more traceable in history than their conquerors, who passed vaguely into legend, a race of the demigods. To Firbolg builders is attributed the great cahir of Dun Angus which crowns a cliff in Aran with its double ring of Cyclopean walls and its *chevaux de frise* of pointed stones. Clare was possessed by them, until, in the end of the fourth century, Milesians of the Dalcassian stock—the great Thomond clan—conquered and subdued these Firbolgs, but probably did not drive them off the rocky lands of Burren. Even after Christianity came, they were well recognised as a distinct people ; for it is related that the O'Kellys came up under the leadership of St. Brellan from the shores of Lough Neagh to take land from the Firbolgs, and, having defeated them, occupied Hy

Many, the region between Galway Bay and the Shannon.

Mr. MacNeill indeed points out that Dugald MacFirbis, last of the hereditary professional historians, wrote in the seventeenth century a list of Firbolg tribes occupying land, at the time of Patrick's coming, and of these there were forty-seven. Admitting that MacFirbis used the term Firbolg loosely to cover all the vassal peoples who were under Milesian rule, it seems probable that when St. Patrick came all the mountainous regions of Connaught and Clare —that is, the far West—were occupied by this earlier race, and as yet unconquered by the Milesian kings. In later days sovereignty changed frequently, but probably the race has altered very little. Dr. Costello thinks that in the district north of Tuam, called in Irish *Conmaicne Cinel Dubhán*, the folk still keep the short stature, the dark eyes and hair of the primitive stock, whose vanquished king rests under the cairn on the shore of Lough Mask behind Captain Boycott's famous residence. So the two ends of Irish history meet—at least locally.

This earliest stratum of historical deposit in the region east and north of Lough Corrib is the special concern of this chapter. Yet there are other fields of interest, only too ample, to be explored and indicated. Once across the Shannon, you are in a different Ireland from any that exists to the east of that great natural dividing line; for in Connaught

neither Dane nor Norman nor Englishman (except, perhaps, about Sligo) has left a distinctive trace. They have come, indeed, they have drawn money out of the country; but if they have stayed, they have been fused into the Irishry. Recalcitrant Connaught has received from alien civilisation only the railway, the workhouse, and the gaol. What her own civilisation was able to do for her own people may be better judged, perhaps, at Cong than any other place; for Cong, now an obscure village visited by a few tourists and fishermen, was once a great school of learning, the resort of many students—and not less famous for the skill of artificers, whose priceless work in metal rivals that of any age or country. This is not too bold a brag to make concerning the Cross of Cong, that marvellous shrine which was fashioned in the twelfth century by the orders of Turlough O'Conor, the High King. What the monkish illuminator did with pencil and colours in the Book of Kells, another monk here in the West did with infinitely fine tracery of drawn metal and with inlay of precious stones. And just as the cross at Monasterboice makes a kind of complement to the Book of Kells, so that both must be considered together by whoever wishes to judge the degree to which purely Irish craftsmanship attained in the Boyne valley; so here the Cross of Cong should be studied in connection with that other different yet very similar masterpiece, the chancel arch at Tuam. And since

Tuam is on the way to Cong, let us first write of Tuam.[1]

Not many visitors from the outside world come to Tuam, I think, and the loss is theirs; for nowhere in all my journeyings did I see and hear so much of interest. Yet this means, in part, that nowhere else was I under the guidance of an antiquarian who was also an Irish scholar and a sportsman—and, above all, one to whom nothing seemed alien that was a part of Irish life or Irish history. My task is only to put down a few siftings from the rich mine of his discourse.

East of Tuam, on the road to Miltown, we went to see souterrains, but saw also *Muilionn an Leipreacháin*, a fairy mill, such as are not uncommon in this porous limestone country, among the turloughs in which it abounds. The turlough is a boggy hollow, always flooded in winter, but in the summer drained off into underground rivers by *slugga*, or swallow-holes. Here on the Miltown road was a turlough on our right, from which a small watercourse ran trickling till it was carried by a culvert under the road and emerged on the left, where a wide rocky bed showed how considerable a stream it must be in winter. But a little distance off, under a clump of thorn trees, the

[1] I must not be taken as advising any one to go to Cong by rail who can get the steamer from Galway. But at least the rail journey gives a chance of visiting St. Jarlath's cathedral.

watercourse ended; and standing there, by the chasm where the limpid water sank out of sight, one seemed to hear the humming and whirling of busy wheels at work in the recesses below. Myth-making fancy could have no more obvious suggestion; and legend tells how in the old times people left their corn overnight by the mouth of these mills and came to find it ready ground for them in the morning, till, one evil night, some covetous thief stole a poor widow's corn, and the fairies, in disgust with humanity, ceased their good offices for ever.

For this occurrence history gives no date. But a little further on the same road, at Kilbannon Church, we came on the track of St. Patrick; the print of his two knees is shown near the shattered round tower, erected where the Apostle left his disciple St. Benen—whose disciple again was St. Jarlath, Tuam's founder. In this direction also are the ruins of an ancient nunnery standing near the Clare-Galway river; it was founded by a daughter of King Turlough O'Conor, who became its abbess; and I should know nothing about it but that I went to fish an excellent pool in the river just below, and noticed the road hedged with crab-apple trees—very beautiful in the late autumn. My antiquarian's theory was that these apples were degenerates, escaped from the trim orchard[1] which had once surrounded the nunnery in days when there was tillage and

[1] At Ross Errilly, near Headford, are hedges of wild plums—not sloes—probably a similar survival.

gardening where now bullocks roam in undisputed possession of the rich pasture.

Yet the bullocks' reign is challenged, for about Tuam land is being bought by small tenants, and where these make an oasis among the big graziers' holdings, crops are to be seen—perhaps the beginning of a new and much-desired economic era. Let us note also as a fact of modern history that the Clare River is one of the most singular rivers in Ireland. Once a slow stream meandering through bog, it now flows in many reaches straight as a canal, but rapid and swirling, along a deep-cut bed hewn to the very rock in the time of some relief works. Thus the land is better drained and less exposed to floods ; the salmon have a better spawning ground ; and for once the Board of Works seem to have done the right thing. But that was a long time ago.

Between the era of Boards of Works and that of royal Irish ladies founding convents, much history has to be filled in ; and a step backwards is afforded by the *leacht*, or monumental standing stone to be seen a mile and a half out on the Claremorris road. The inscription reads : "Pray for the souls of James Lally and his family, 1673." It is curious, first of all, to find this Gaelic custom of erecting such cenotaphs surviving into the seventeenth century—one more proof how little Connaught was altered, even when it began to use the English tongue. But my concern is rather with the family than with the tomb.

Lally is a corruption of the Irish name *ua Maollalaidh* (O'Mullaly), and the heads of this sept were once princes in Hy Many. In the sixteenth century they were still people of importance, for two of the name were Archbishops of Tuam. In 1673, after the Restoration, James Lally was a landed gentleman with estates about his place of Tullinadaly, not far from where his *leacht* is erected. But his grandson, Captain Lally, sat in James's Parliament, and when war came, fought on the losing side at Aughrim, and followed Sarsfield into exile—forfeiting the family estate of Tullinadaly. This Lally died of a wound received at the siege of Montmélian, and so England was finally quit of one rebel. But his brother Gerald, who had accompanied his flight, married in France and transmitted the hereditary claim and the hereditary resentment to a son, who, ennobled for brilliant services at Fontenoy and elsewhere, chose for his title Lally de Tollendal. Not one in a thousand of those who know that name recognise Tullinadaly in its French disguise ; and perhaps not one in ten readers of history know that the French general who came so near to wrest India from the English was the son of an Irish rebel, doubly an enemy of England, like those who turned the day at Fontenoy.

Lally's services to France were requited by the loss of his head. But his son repaired the family fortunes, and having defended the Bourbons in their days of adversity was rewarded after the Restoration with a marquisate. If you look for Ireland's glories in the

eighteenth century, you will find them everywhere, except in Ireland.

At Tullinadaly there is only a farmhouse now; but the fair after which the place is called *Tulach na Dáile* (the Hillock of the Assembly) still continues. It is a very curious instance of the force which tradition exercises in Ireland that, although the fair-green is three miles out of Tuam and remote from any shop or public-house, no persuasion has availed to remove this annual gathering into the town; buyers and sellers still preferring to resort, even at some inconvenience, to the spot were their fathers and forefathers bought and sold before them.

I have followed the fortunes of a name from the days when the Lallys were kinglets in Hy Many to the Flight of the Wild Geese, and later. In like manner, many passages in the chequered centuries are called up by the famous Abbey Knockmoy, which lies also within easy reach of Tuam, but on the westward. In 1189 a party of Normans under Almeric St. Laurence pushed into Connaught. They were few but brave and mail-clad—the equivalent for some expedition of to-day which, armed with repeating rifles and machine guns, goes out to conquer a country of African spearmen. And like many such an expedition they met with disaster; Cathal O'Conor, named *Cromh Dearg*, or The Red Hand, overwhelmed them in the bog which still borders the river, killing out all but two; and here, as a

thankoffering for his victory, he built an abbey for the Cistercians.[1] In the church antiquaries pore with interest over the trace of frescoes on the chancel walls. The design (still traceable, though the colour is all but clean gone) speaks of a later period than Cromh Dearg's; but doubtless the beautiful building itself and the graceful east window was the work of Irish builders in the twelfth century—much defaced and spoilt four hundred years later when the banished monks returned for a while in some intermittency of persecution. They returned, but not in their old strength or splendour, and here, as elsewhere, there is a pathetic trace of failing state in the blocking up of aisles so as to form the whole church out of what was only the chancel in the pristine plan. Yet at Knockmoy, as elsewhere, so much of the structure survives that one inclines to ask why, in a country where so much ecclesiastical building is done, these ancient remains should not be again restored and revived. The answer is, unfortunately, that all have been used (and abused) as places of burial, and the soil is a charnel house. Here in Abbey Knockmoy the ground is paved with tombstones—many of which, by a custom still prevalent in Connaught, bear trademarks—the smith has his hammer, the wright his tools, and so on. Families have acquired pre-

[1] The abbey is derelict, but St. Bernard, the great saint of the Cistercians, is still honoured here, and on his festival, August 20th, people make pilgrimage to Knockmoy, more especially the fishermen from the Claddagh in Galway.

scriptive right, the place is defended against any cleansing by a strong sentiment—which I saw illustrated elsewhere.

Driving from Tuam to Headford we stopped at the ruined church of Donaghpatrick, where St. Patrick placed yet another disciple at a place which seems to have been the limit of his westward journeyings through the plain of Connaught. Here was a graveyard, with a new addition lately walled in. But, exploring round the old church, we came on an opened grave, by the side of which were lying five skulls and the fragments of several coffins, as well as the tombstone marking the family name. A little further on the road we met the funeral; and I daresay the man would not have died easy without the knowledge that the bones of his kin would be rooted up and exposed, to make elbow room for his own remains among them.

That same drive brought me past many landmarks. Near Donaghpatrick itself is a *crannóg* on a small lake, where once the princely O'Flaherties had their fortress. Descendants survive on the spot, though no longer as lake dwellers. But at Headford, a whole chapter could be written. Near by the town, standing amid swamps on the Black River, is the famous Franciscan monastery of Ross Errilly, built in 1351. In its spacious precinct all is ruin and desolation, where once were learning, religion, and hospitality; but the building survives so completely as to render easily reconstructed in imagination the whole scheme of its

monastic life. Not merely the ground plan, but every wall is left almost intact ; only the ornamentation was destroyed in 1651 when the Cromwellian soldiers rooted like boars through it. Misfortune had been constant with the Brothers since the first suppression in 1538 ; but the Earls of Clanricarde lent a constant protection, and again and again purchased back the confiscated lands. Under this shelter the friars, six times driven out, six times returned, till their last and final banishment in 1753—rendered inevitable when an Irish Catholic, in pursuit of a private feud, laid information against the Earl of that day for harbouring monks. The incident is only too characteristic of Irish history.

I noted as very typical of the present day and its changes that the big demesne of the St. Georges at Headford, which Cæsar Otway some sixty years ago stopped to admire and praise, has recently passed into the hands of a successful merchant from Tuam, who, I fear, does not inherit the "unshaken loyalty and Protestantism" of the Colonel St. George whom Otway visited. In Headford itself a plantation of Protestants has withered away : yet the place has not resumed its ancient style, *Ath Cinn ;* the language of the plantation has rooted itself, though not the religion.

Facts like these meet one all over Connaught. The whole body of the people is Catholic : and though the land is mostly owned by Protestants, no Protestant family seems to thrive on the soil. In all

of Connemara hardly a single mansion is in the hands of "the old stock"—that is to say, of landlords dating back for a few generations. East of the Corrib, things have not gone so far: but when land purchase begins to operate, it is likely that the country will pass altogether to the Catholics—who already control its whole administration. Even now the cathedral of Tuam is roomy on a Sunday, and very soon it may be able to hold the entire Church of Ireland population in Connaught.

I hope, however, that no one will tax the Church of Ireland with vain expense for the very excellent work that was done—naturally with meagre means—on this illustrious building. Some centuries ago—probably in Jacobean times—the ancient pre-Norman structure had fallen into ruin and was restored in such fashion that the short chancel became a vestibule, and the glorious chancel arch was made into a western doorway. In 1878 a more intelligent remodelling was effected; the more recent body of the church was turned into a chapter house, a new nave was built to the west, and the chancel is now restored to its true position. Over the access to it springs the great arch, wrought in red sandstone; for early in the twelfth century Irish builders could not carve with ease in hard stone. Yet in all other points they had attained mastery; and this semi-circular arch, which is, in truth, six concentric orders of arches, narrowing as they recede, displays a bewildering intricacy of

design and ornament. Wind and weather through centuries of exposure have blurred the exquisite work, in which figures, animal and human, blend into the conventional pattern ; cobblers have, in careless generations, chipped pieces off to sharpen their tools ; yet still, there it stands as a monument of what Irish civilisation had attained before any Norman set foot in Ireland.

The arch was made by unnamed workmen when O-h-Oisin was mitred abbot in Tuam, and Turlough O'Conor ruled as king in Connaught. Their names are inscribed on the stone cross which now stands in the market-place where Lake drew rein in 1798 from the races of Castlebar—but I spare my English readers that story. The cross shows as a cross of the Irish pattern (with a wrought circle embracing the arms), but it is not as it was designed by the artist. Eight slabs of sculptured stone completed it, and of the six which made the tall slender shaft three are missing ; and those which now are in place were only recently brought together—one from its place in the chimney of a house in the town. Another is to be seen, detached, in the cathedral : and it is hard to understand why this stone is not with the others—or rather, why the cathedral authorities refuse to give it up—and why the original design is not restored at least in its proportions by letting in new uncarved sections of stone. At present what was once a work worthy of the artist who wrought the arch—a tall slender structure thirty-two feet high—now stands disfigured

and dumpy, interesting only for its minute interlacing of carven scroll-work.[1]

The art of stone carving has not wholly left this western country, or at least it lived till within recent memory. At Cong, the cloister was restored by Sir Benjamin Guinness, with a great deal of tact, and the modern pillars there were executed by a local artisan, of a family who had followed the craft from generation to generation. Still, no more than good craftsmanship is there to be seen. At Tuam the case is different. The Catholic Cathedral well deserves a visit, though in truth it is seen to most advantage as one fishes down the broad valley of the Clare river, where its tower, solid and dignified, yet removed from the commonplace by a decoration of pinnacles, makes a noble object in the landscape. The whole structure is very wonderful considering that it was begun before even the days of emancipation. The old Archbishop who projected the building, and lived to see its completion, was a man of high courage; and a story (which I heard from a bishop who was not a Protestant) tells how the Protestant bishop of that day came to survey the broad foundations, and after a glance at their scope, asked, "Who is the fool that has done this?" That was what he said: but a day or two later an envelope

[1] The cross could never stand unsupported to its full height. It was evidently pinned against the cathedral, for the mark of dowels is on its arms, and the side which should be next the wall is unsculptured.

enclosing simply a hundred pound note reached the sanguine builder; and though the sender never revealed himself, he was shrewdly guessed at. But whether a bishop of the Church of Ireland did this or no, Catholics will tell you that a deal of Protestant money is in that huge fabric. The fact adds interest to the building, which unlike Sir Thomas Deane's academic restoration of St. Jarlath's, the older cathedral, really expresses the life and ideas of an Irish community at a given date. That expression is due chiefly to the work of one man, not an artisan, but an artist.

All round the exterior are heads in stone; all along the groining of the nave's roof are heads in plaster—heads treated for the most part in a spirit of grotesque, yet even where the caricature is strongest, unmistakably the heads of Irish country-folk. The work is of Cruickshank's date, and some of the modellings instantly reveal his influence, transferred to work in stone; but in the best of them there is more than Cruickshank ever put into a drawing. Especially in the east front there are two contrasted types, sculptured as terminals on either side of a window. One of them represents a man with large but receding forehead, prominent eyes, and long beard ill-disguising the almost disappearing chin—pure type of a religious enthusiast. This, tradition says, is the portrait of a devout peasant who secured the honour of drawing the first load of stones to the building. Opposite is a face still more boldly

caricatured—almost the traditional Punch, with nut-cracker nose and chin. But look at your Punch, and you will see in him at once, more unmistakably than anywhere else, the Irishman. The shrewd, cynical, deep-recessed eyes, from under the brow with its heavy eyebrows and heavy bosses above them (how admirably modelled!), speak of a type that has always existed in Ireland, not always in harmony with the religious authorities. Such a man might have been the Clare schoolmaster who wrote the scandalous and most witty poem which he called *Mediæ Noctis Consilium*; such a man was, if tradition does not lie, the carver of these grotesques, who set his own likeness here among the rest. He lacked training, doubtless; and the heads on the roof in the interior show a lack of the technical tricks which are needed to produce the desired effect at that height. But when he died in Tuam, somewhere about the middle of last century, a true artist was lost to Ireland.

It is a pity that he did not carve the statue of MacHale, the Lion of St. Jarlath's, which stands outside the western doorway. The great Archbishop was a recognised power in his own day; but it is only now that we are beginning to understand how far-sighted was the old warrior, who would not allow a "National" school to be established in his diocese, and fought fiercely to keep alive in Ireland the language and the customs of the Irish.

Well, the language has perhaps a better chance in

Tuam to-day than in any other town of its size; and when you see the market thronged with men in the old-fashioned cutaway frieze coat with its square lappel (and even here and there one in the knee breeches), every man of them with "a fine tongue of Irish" at command, you know at least that you are in a country about whose nationality there cannot be any possible mistake. That it may be so always, and more so!

I have been tempted to enlarge on Tuam, because a part of my purpose is to emphasise how much that is worth seeing in Ireland goes almost unnoticed. But the real centre of this chapter was meant to be Cong: Cong with Moytura close behind it, Cong with its beautiful abbey; Cong endeared to me because on the first day of my fishing there I caught the biggest trout of many seasons. Seventeen pounds we called him, for brevity and elegance, though his real weight was sixteen and three quarters. My seven thousand blessings on Michael Lydon of Galway who sold me the "wagtail" minnow which he took; on Johnny Lydon who gaffed him for me, and his father, Tom Lydon, who handled the boat; and on the little draper's shop in Cong where I bought the very slender trace, undesigned for such uses, which nevertheless brought him safely to the gaff.

I do not mean to say that the casual visitor can hope for such another fish—at least, that he is at all likely to get one. But beyond a doubt, with fair

luck he may get in a few days' fishing brown trout quite heavy enough to content a reasonable man, and with exceptional luck may have something to brag of for the rest of his days. A brown trout over ten pounds is far rarer than a salmon over thirty, and fish of that weight are killed every year on Mask or Corrib.

In the same way, I do not suppose that any other traveller is likely to have quite the chance which befel the artist of this book—"my grief," as the Irish song says, "that I was not of his company"—when the steamer took him from Galway to Cong. I was driving from Headford at the same time, and even country people greeting my driver commented on that wonderful sky. Such a sunset does not come once in five years, and I waste no words in trying to convey its indescribable pageantry. But to see it as Mr. Thomson saw it, while the steamer ploughed northward up the long narrow lough, with all this gorgeous array of crimson and scarlet, gold and yellow, mauve and purple, hung behind and among the great mountains which close the upper end of the lake, beyond its innumerable "inches" and islands, was in all truth the chance of a lifetime. Such a chance could not come to many travellers. But by the very nature of that journey, which brings you to Cong about sunset all through summer and autumn, there is every chance of approaching a scene of rare beauty under the most beautiful conditions.

Those who live at Cong challenge comparison for

this upper end and broad basin of the lake against Killarney. Not so lovely, I should say ; but perhaps bolder, more rugged, and, so far, more impressive. But I have no space to write of scenery. The essential point to note is that Cong stands on a neck of limestone country, about four miles broad, which divides Lough Corrib from the huge basin of Lough Mask : and under and through this neck Mask's great sheet of water sends a subterranean river that breaks out of the ground in a famous chasm a mile or so from Cong. The most curious comment on this physical fact is afforded by the great canal, cut to connect the lakes, which lies there now a dry bed of boulders. The porous limestone rock refused to hold the water—as, to us, wise after the event, it seems natural to expect. But, though the canal is dry, there flows past Cong, and out beside Lord Ardilaun's great house into Corrib, a river so white and pure as only a spring bursting from the rock can be. And beside that clear broad river, enclosed in the angle between it and a smaller stream not less limpid, stand the ruins of what was once perhaps the most famous abbey of the West.

Cong is said to have been founded in 624 by Domnall MacHugh for St. Fechin, its first abbot ; and in the year 1010 it was one of the five sees of the province of Connaught. In 1114 the abbey was burned, and at some time in that century it was rebuilt for the order of Augustinians. To this retreat Rory O'Conor, the last titular king of all

Ireland, betook himself when he retired in 1183 from the kingship, leaving his son as regent. Here also he died in 1198, though his remains were carried to the Shannon, and laid in Clonmacnoise, to have the benefit of St. Ciaran's privilege. But his son, Maurice the Canon, "most illustrious of the Irish for learning psalm-singing and poetry," was buried at Cong: and so too was King Rory's daughter, Nuala, Queen of Uladh. No slab or memorial indicates their graves. But the chapel tomb of the Berminghams marks well a later stage in the history of Connaught. This Norman stock within a very short space became Hibernicised so completely that they dropped their ancestral name, and became MacFiorais (that is, son of Piers), from whom spring the Pearses innumerable in the West. But not, let it be noted, the Persses, one of Galway's "tribes"—descendants from an English merchant settler, who lived inside the ring-fence of city walls, and prayed every Sunday: *From the ferocious O'Flaherties, Good Lord, deliver us!*

The most ancient memorial of the past to be found at Cong is the old stone cross, whose shaft lies in the abbey, but its base, with a plainly-cut modern shaft and cross, stands in the village street, and on this base are recorded the names of two abbots—Niahol and Gillibard O'Duffy. Concerning this inscription the custodian of the abbey told me a tale. There was a boy near Cong, and he was stupid and could learn nothing, but spent all his time in the

fields: and in a certain field one day he fell asleep with his flannel jacket for a pillow. That evening he came home, and his father was reading the newspaper. The boy asked for it and read every word that was on the paper. They took him then to the Protestant rector of the parish, and there was not a book in the rector's house that the boy could not read. Then

Cong Abbey.

they sent him down into Munster (where the famous teachers of the classics were) to learn the Greek and Latin, but there was no master that was able to teach him anything that he did not know before. And when Queen Victoria was making the college in Galway, who did she send for but the same boy to be the head of it? O'Beirne Crowe, that was his

name ; but in the latter end he died in want, for he did not take good care of himself ; and he was the first man that read the inscription on the cross that is in the street at Cong.

From the same authority (the abbey's custodian) I learned some interesting details concerning the chief glory of Cong in old days, which now is Cong's no longer—the famous Processional Cross. But first let me quote from Wilde's description of this masterpiece.

"It consists of an oaken cross covered with plates of bronze and silver, washed in many places with a thick layer of gold, and having interspersed golden filigree work of most minute character around its front centre. All the front and back plates are elaborately carved with that intertwined pattern, or strap work, with grotesque animals, which is specially characteristic of Irish ornamentation. . . . The outer corners of each compartment were originally studded with precious stones, glass, or figured enamel paste in white and dark blue colours. Supported upon a raised boss decorated with niello in the centre, there is a large polished crystal, under which was placed originally the relique sent from Rome to King Turlough O'Conor in 1123. . . . Around its sides there are a series of Latin and Irish inscriptions, both in the Irish character ; the letters are punched into the silver plate, apparently by dyes or types. . . . The foot of the cross springs from a highly decorated dog's head, which rises out of a globe, the ornamentation of which in detail is a marvel of the workmanship of its own or any other period. Beneath that wall is a decorated socket, into which was inserted the staff, or pole, with which the cross was carried. The inscription affords unerringly the history of this magnificent relique."

The main inscription, twice repeated, is a Latin verse :

"*Hac cruce crux tegitur qua passus conditor orbis.*"

"In this cross is the cross enclosed on which the Founder of the World suffered." But the chief interest lies in the Irish inscriptions, which bid us pray for Turlough O'Conor, king of Erin, for whom this shrine was made: to hold a remnant of the true cross which he had procured: and for Muiredach O'Duffy, the Senior of Erin (that is, for the Archbishop of Connaught), whom the Four Masters describe as "Chief Senior of all Ireland in wisdom, in chastity, in the bestowal of jewels and food," and who died at Cong on May 16th A.D. 1150. Thus we learn the patrons of the work and its purpose. But prayers are also asked for Flannacan O'Duffy, Coarb of Comman and Ciaran (that is, for the abbot who ruled both at Roscommon in St. Comman's Abbey, and at Clonmacnoise in St. Ciaran's), under whose superintendence the shrine was made. Lastly, and this is the most interesting of all, we are bidden to "a prayer for Maelisu MacBraddan O'Echan, who made this shrine." And since this O'Hechan was coarb of St. Finnen at Cloncraff in county Roscommon, we know the place of making as well as the artist's name.

What became of this priceless relic from the twelfth century onwards we have no means of knowing. Wilde can only tell us that when he was a boy it used to be kept "in a three-cornered cupboard in a little sitting-room" by the last Abbot of Cong; for up till the year 1829, there survived the Reverend Patrick Prendergast, parish priest of Cong,

and the last of the Augustinian Canons Regular. The order, expelled from its precinct, had clung on, as the friars did so often in Ireland's history, hoping for restoration ; and according to my informant the last abbot might have named a successor, and was ready to do so. But his curate, to whom the offer was made, refused the honour ; then, having thought it over, returned to accept, but found a refusal in his turn. How the cross passed from the keeping of Abbot Prendergast into the Royal Irish Academy's Museum is not clearly stated by Wilde. In point of fact, I am told, it was sold by the curate, through Wilde's intermediacy, for a hundred pounds : and when the news leaked out there was red fury. On Christmas and Easter Day the cross used to be set on the altar ; and on that Christmas men talked fiercely of nailing up the door against the priest who had robbed the parish of its treasure. It must be said that the parish guarded it badly, for the central crystal containing the fragment of cross had been removed from the jewel, and, says Wilde, "was usually carried by a lady in her pocket." (It is now lost beyond hope of recovery.) However, the parish was none the less angry, and a lawsuit was threatened : but a priest who succeeded to the seller of the cross decided to take the law into his own hands. Dressed in a big overcoat, he visited the Museum where the cross was exposed, and stood lost in study before it. At last the policeman in charge heard a crash of glass ; the case was broken, and both cross and

priest were gone. Rushing into the street, he followed and seized the raider; whereupon a mob began to gather, and after some parley the priest was allowed to take the cross home to his lodging. Then followed anxious conferences: and at last the good father returned to Cong pacified by a promise of a minutely faithful picture of the precious relic, which he received and treasured till he died.

No doubt the cross is safe now and conveniently accessible for all and sundry; and perhaps better so than in the manse of a parish priest. But suppose things had gone otherwise. Suppose the Augustinians had never been expelled: suppose their centre of learning and the arts had been allowed to glow and radiate continually: suppose Cong were still as fitting a home for such a treasure as it was in the twelfth century—what a different Ireland we should have! However, the monastery was swept away like the rest, reformed off the face of the earth; and the task of introducing a higher civilisation proceeded. Go to Cong now and ask for the signs of it. You will see, certainly, Lord Ardilaun's great house and his famous woodcock covers. But what will be pointed out to you with special emphasis by your car-driver or boatman, is the scene of this or that bloody murder —horrible incidents in the suppressed civil war which raged during the 'eighties.

Still more significant in that neighbourhood is Lough Mask Castle, where history was made with a vengeance; for here it was that the struggle with

Captain Boycott added a sinister word to the language ; here it was that the weapon of the peasantry was forged and named. The struggle is mainly over now, and victory rests with the peasants—with the race, long conquered but never submissive, that always held itself distinct from the new masters of the soil, and always cherished a memory of the rights that had been confiscated. They are fixed now on the soil as tenants, not to be disturbed at the will of any man ; and soon they will be the full owners. But who can count the ruin, moral and physical, that has resulted from this war ? Yet who is to blame the winners ? What Irish rule meant may be inferred from the Abbey and the Cross of Cong : what English rule has meant you may gather from the country as it is to-day, where among people naturally gentle, courteous, kindly and intelligent, ignorance and cruelty have gone hand in hand. For deeds like the killing of Lord Mountmorres and the Huddys, apart from their horror, throw back the cause of the Irish tenants and the Irish race past calculation.

Yet, as it chances, in this very region can be seen the springing up of what may well come to be a centre of intellectual life and civilisation, rivalling the old glories of Cong—though as yet, indeed, far enough from any splendours but those of enthusiasm. At Tourmaceady on the western shore of Lough Mask, under the Partry mountains, is the Connaught School of Irish study established by the Gaelic League—where

during the summer months students can come and, in a district where Irish is the common tongue, make part of a community hard at work, not so much learning Irish (for few come there without full knowledge of the language) as studying Irish literature and learning how to teach Irish ; a community which is the germ indeed of a truly Irish university. That is a development later than the land war, and of far brighter augury.

I would close my chapter here, yet there is in Lough Corrib one place of so surpassing interest and beauty that I cannot leave it unmentioned—the lovely island of Inchagoill.

Corrib is the longest lake in these islands—twenty-eight miles straight from south to north, and then another twelve miles of narrow water shoots off westward at a right angle, piercing into the mountains of the Joyce country. This upper stretch should be the most picturesque of any, but I never explored it : and the first twenty miles of the journey from Galway are not particularly interesting, along a tract of water sometimes barely half a mile wide, filled with rocks, and reefs, and long spits of stones. To me Corrib means really the broad basin eight miles across, from Cong to Oughterard, in which islands big and little lift their tall groves of pine and larch. Inchagoill is one of the largest, and it lies midway in that beautiful expanse. I fished down to it in about two hours, but the little yacht which carried my picnicking friends made the run in less than half an hour,

and a charming object her white sails were, flying now across a background of dark trees, now across an open gap of sky and sharply crested wavelets. We timed it neatly, and there was I landing a handsome two pound trout just as the yacht ran in to the little bay where she was to get her moorings. Skilful hands tacked her up a narrow channel with pine woods all about her ; and then we went off in a body to explore the graveyard and the two ruined churches. Of these one is absolutely primitive—a matter of ten yards long, built of huge stones with the roughest masonry, and having a narrow square-headed doorway, whose jambs incline towards the top. The second church, very little larger, is of more recent date, for the masonry is in courses and the stones are cut and dressed ; still more significant, the doorway is a noble example of Irish decorated architecture, skilfully restored by setting back the tumbled stones. Its heavy semi-circular arches, each recessed within the other as in the great chancel arch at Tuam—and wrought like that also in red sandstone—have the general features of all the early Christian art which derives from the Roman or Byzantine types. The heads which crown the capitals, with their plaited beards wrought into the scroll work so characteristic of the Celt, are indeed truly Byzantine.

Of the history of this church and its simpler predecessor we have no knowledge beyond what is given in the Irish name of the island *Inis an Ghoill Craoibhtheach*, the island of the devout foreigner—

and in the third and most remarkable monument of the place. This is a small pillar stone standing now as a headstone over a grave. But on the stone are carved in bold relief two crosses, and an inscription in a very ancient Irish character. Petrie, who read this inscription—of which all the letters are plain as print, practically unaffected by the weather—gave it as follows :

LIE LUGNEDON MAC LIMENUEH.

"The Stone of Lugnath, son of Limenueh."—And since Limenueh, or Liemania, was said to be the sister of St. Patrick, and Lugnath her son was Patrick's pilot or navigator, the tomb was, in Petrie's judgment, not only of Patrick's date, but erected over his near kinsman. This view has been disputed, but is supported by the authority of Dr. Joyce ; and there is little doubt from the character of the lettering that the inscription dates back to the fifth or sixth century.

I was even more interested with a discovery or theory of my own. The name of the one householder who lives on the island is Kinneevy, that is *Mac an Naoimh*, or Saint's son. Whether he may claim descent from the Gall Craobhthach who gave the island his name, or whether it merely came to pass that every man inhabiting the island called himself "of the Saint's family," there is no doubt in my mind that the name has been there since surnames came into use under Brian Boru, and that it

keeps the memory of the "devout foreigner." I present to the world with confidence this result of meditations, arrived at while the kettle sang over a crackling wood fire, and we who watched basked on a little beach of silvery lake sand, grown over with golden John's wort, and backed by a brake of hazel among which late honeysuckle still blossomed, and early blackberries were ripe for the picking.

CHAPTER IV

ARMAGH—THE RED BRANCH OF ULSTER

HARDLY any town of importance in Ireland is so little visited as Armagh, for it lies on no main thoroughfare of railroad; yet there is hardly any town or city, great or small, of equal interest to the historically minded. Its ecclesiastical primacy is continuous from the time when St. Patrick, after long wanderings, fixed there his own monastic settlement, fifteen hundred and sixty-four years ago. Yet through all that long tract of generations Armagh is never so salient in Ireland's history as it was in the day of its still earlier glory; for the Height of Macha rivalled Tara's fame when Dublin was only the Hurdle Ford across the Liffey; or rather, if the newest and most probable theory of Irish history be true, Tara itself was only the seat of a petty principality when the heroes of the Red Branch mustered round Conchobar MacNessa.[1] All that is most glorious in Irish epic story springs from this root:

[1] This name is pronounced Conachar, or, still further shortened, Conor.

and, legendary though the stories be, they have certainly a basis in fact. We can stand to-day in Conchobar's fortress where the sons of Usnach were foully done to death; and we can fix, by a tradition which has in it nothing improbable, the period of Cuchulain's feats.

Emain Macha,[1] the great rath with double en-

View from Emain, with the two Cathedrals.

closure of bank and mound, which lies rather more than a mile to the westward of Armagh, was none of Conchobar's building. According to the tradition

[1] Now called "the Navan Fort." Navan here is *An Emhain*, the medial consonant having been softened Navan in Meath is *An Uaimh*.

which dates its foundation about 330 years before Christ, Macha was daughter of the High King, Aedh Ruad, who left his life and his name in the dangerous ford of Erne at Assaroe, *Eas Aedh Ruaidh*, Red Hugh's Waterfall. After Aedh's drowning, Macha, like the Amazon that she was, claimed his throne, but found her succession disputed. One of the rival claimants, Cimbaeth, she wedded, and, as for the other princes, single-handed she captured them (by a stratagem which, says Archbishop Healy, did more credit to her cunning and valour than to her modesty); and she set the captives digging earthworks on a line, which she traced out with *eó muin*, the broochpin of her neck; *unde*, Emain Macha.

But another legend, with less appearance certainly of historic fact, is so woven into the Ultonian tradition that it cannot be set aside. There was a certain widower, Crundchu, who lived lonely with a heavy charge of children, till one day a young and comely woman silently entered his house, silently went about the duties of a housewife, and silently took her place by his side. All prospered with Crundchu till an unlucky day, when the Ultonians were holding festival and he made ready to go. His wife counselled him against going, but bid him at least to speak no word of her in the assembly. There was horse-racing, and the King's horses carried all before them. "Nothing lives that could pass them," said the people. "My wife runs quicker," said Crundchu. They

haled him to the King ; and messengers were sent for the woman.

"My husband has spoken unwisely," said she. "As for me, I am about to be delivered of a child."

"Alas ! for that," said the messengers, "for your husband will be put to death if you do not come."

"Then I must go," she said.

She was brought to the assembly, and folk crowded round her.

"I am not fit for men's eyes," she said. "Why am I brought here ?"

"To run against the King's two horses !" they shouted.

Then she asked for mercy. "Help me," she said, "for a mother bore each of you." But there was no respite given. She ran, and she outran the horses ; but at the goal her pains came on her, and she bore twins, and so the place is called *Emain Macha*, Macha's Twins, for "Macha," she said, "is my name." And she cried out in her pain, and at the sound of that cry all hearers were seized with weakness. "The weakness shall be upon you in the time of your need," she said, "the weakness of a woman in childbirth, for five days and four nights ; and so it shall be till the ninth generation."

This story accounts for more than the name Emania. The sickness of the men of Ulster is an integral part of the greatest saga of the Red Branch cycle—the *Táin Bó Cuailgne*, or Cattlelifting of

Cooley. Some account has to be given of the personages in this famous tale.

Conchobar MacNessa took his name from his mother, for by her sovereignty came to him. Her first husband died, leaving her with this son, for whom greatness had been foretold. Christian tellers of the story say it was no wonder, for he had the same birth hour as Christ. Nessa, being still beautiful, was sought in marriage by Fergus MacRoy, King of Ulster; but she made a subtle pact with him—that he should for one year resign the sovereign power to her son, "in order that his posterity might be called the descendants of a king." Fergus agreed; but, when the year was out, Conchobar had so wrought among the Ultonians that they would have no other to rule over them. Fergus, in red anger, withdrew into Connaught, where the fierce queen Maeve ruled at Cruachan along with her husband Ailill. (Let it be noted in passing that the rival seat of power to Emain Macha is Cruachan; Tara is not heard of; and the southern half of Ireland does not come into the story at all.)

Maeve, as I have said, was a fierce woman, and not willing to be surpassed in anything, and jealous even of her own husband's possessions. And so when she learnt that in all her herds there was no match for his Find-bennach, the White Bull of Connaught, she sent out messengers through Ireland who reported that in Cuailgne (the Omeath peninsula, which encloses Carlingford bay on the south) was a brown bull whose

like was not in Ireland. She tried to buy the bull, and when that failed, raised a hosting to invade Ulster—watching the time when the periodic sickness would be on Conchobar's warriors.

The great foray set out from Cruachan (now Rath Croghan in Roscommon), crossing the Shannon above Lough Ree ; thence, traversing the plains of Longford and Westmeath into Meath itself, they reached Kells in the valley of the Blackwater. All this country was afterwards the kingdom of Brefny, which stretched as far as Kells ; and it seems that then Kells was also on the frontier of Ulster, from which the kingdom of Oriel had not yet been cut off. At all events, as the host marched by Slane and over the country to the north of Knowth (not far from where Mellifont and Monasterboice stand), they met with their first sign of opposition. Near a place called Athgabhla (the Ford of the Forks), they met the chariots of two scouts returning "and their cushions very red on them." In the ford itself was the fork of a tree, severed from the trunk with one blow, and planted upright in the ford by a cast from a chariot ; and on the four arms of the fork were the heads of the two scouts and of their charioteers. When the host of Connaught asked who had done this, Fergus MacRoy answered that it was surely Cuchulain, the young hero of the Ultonians.

Cuchulain[1] had got his name, the Hound of Cullen, by a boyish feat ; for, coming alone to the

[1] Pronounce, *Coo-hullen*.

smith Cullen's house, he was attacked by a monstrous dog, and, having killed the creature, volunteered to watch Cullen's house for a year till the whelp which he gave as an eric should be grown to its strength. His own dún was at Muirthemne, just by Dundalk, and Cuailgne was therefore under his special guard. But now it was his duty to defend the whole border line of Ulster, because he alone was exempt from the debility of Macha's curse, for his true father was a man of the Tuatha de Danann.

From the frontier by the Boyne, northwards all through the plain leading to the Mourne mountains, Cuchulain and his charioteer Laeg made war on the host of Ireland ; first harrying them with sling-stones from a distance, then limiting their march daily (by a compact with Maeve) to such time as it should take him to slay the chosen warrior whom they sent out to meet him. It was then that he met and slew his brother-in-arms, Ferdia, at the ford of Ardee. And during that fight Maeve's host must have made good progress, for it lasted four full days.

During the whole of his war Cuchulain had never rested, "except when he slept a little while against his spear after midday, with his head on his clenched fist, and his clenched fist on his spear, and his spear on his knee." But his father, Lugh of the Long Hand, took pity on the champion and came to stand in the gap. When Lugh came across the host of Ireland, shining in jewels and armour and doing warrior feats with his weapons, yet unseen and

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unattacked by any, Cuchulain knew him for "one of his friends from the *sidh*;" and at this friend's bidding he slept, a slumber to match his weariness, for three nights and days.

In that swoon happened another incident of the *Tdin* which relates back to the old story of Macha's twins. The curse was not on children, and the boy troop of Emain Macha—Conchobar's school of young warriors—thought it a pity for Cuchulain to be so long without support, and they set out to the fight with their playing clubs. "And they gave battle thrice to the hosts so that three times their own number fell." But in the end all the boys fell except the King's own son, Folloman MacConchobair, who, not content with his escape, swore that he would never go back to Emain till he had the head of Ailill, Maeve's King, with the golden crown on it. But Ailill's two foster brothers came on him and wounded him to death; so that Cuchulain, awaking from his long slumber, heard of the total slaying of the boy troop; and it was then indeed that the battle fury overtook and transfigured him.

I shall quote a few lines from the strange description of this paroxysm, the symptom of Cuchulain's berserker rage, which gave him his name of *Riastarta*, the Distorted One.

"All over him from his crown to the ground, his flesh and every limb and joint and point and articulation of him quivered as does a tree, yea, a bulrush in mid-current. Within in his skin he put forth an unnatural effort of his body; his feet, his shins, and his knees,

shifted themselves and were behind him; his heels and calves and hams were displaced to the front of his leg bones in condition such that their knotted muscles stood up in lumps as large as the clenched fist of a fighting man."

That is only the opening of a long passage (translated by Mr. S. H. O'Grady) which gradually rises out of any touch with physical reality at all.

"Taller, thicker, more rigid, longer than masts of a great ship was the perpendicular jet of dusky blood which out of his scalp's very central point shot upwards, and then was scattered to the four cardinal points; whereby was formed a magic mist of gloom resembling the smoky pall that drapes a regal dwelling, what time a king at nightfall of a winter's day draws near to it."

That is pure grotesque, from the ordinary European standpoint. But it is worth while to point out that the Japanese are neither bad artists nor bad fighters, and they have always chosen to represent their heroes, pictorially at all events, in much the same spirit of violent contortion. I am sure that the touch would commend itself to them, which tells how Cuchulain's hair bristled in his rage so that if an apple tree were shaken over it every apple would be impaled. In judging these passages, we are judging an alien art, and it becomes us to try and shift the standpoint so as to see what was intended.

Here and there even in the high wrought passages a phrase will occur which strikes home at once. "Fedelm the prophetess, how seest thou our host?"

cries Maeve, asking for an augury. "I see very red, I see red," answers Fedelm.

> I see a fair man who will make play
> With a number of heads on his girdle,
> *A hero's flame over his head,*
> *His forehead the meeting place of victory.*

Yet it is not in the phrasing or the ornament that we look for the true distinction of these legends: it is in the heroic cast of men's minds, the courtesy and the chivalry of their actions. I shall quote a single instance from the famous episode which tells of the fight with Ferdia, whom Maeve induced by cunning bribes to face his brother-in-arms at the ford. Three days the fight lasted without an issue: and at the close of the first day:

"Let us now desist for the present, O Cuchullin," said Ferdia. "Let us indeed desist if the time be come," said Cuchullin. They ceased. They threw away their weapons from them into the hands of their charioteers. Each of them forthwith approached the other, and each put his arms round the other's neck and gave him three kisses. Their horses were in the same paddock that night, and their charioteers were at the same fire; and for the champions their charioteers spread beds of green rushes with wounded men's pillows. . . . Of every herb and healing plant that was applied to the stabs and cuts and gashes, and to all the wounds of Cuchullin, he would send an equal portion westward over the ford to Ferdia, so that the men of Erin might not be able to say, should Ferdia fall by him, that it was by better means of cure he had gotten the victory over him. And of each kind of food and of pleasant drink that was sent by the men of Erin to Ferdia, he would send a fair moiety over the ford northwards to Cuchullin; because the purveyors of Ferdia were more numerous than those of Cuchullin.

On the second night the same courtesies were interchanged. But on the third morning Cuchulain knew a cloud on the face of Ferdia, and that night their separation was "mournful, sorrowful, disheartened"; their horses were not in the same enclosure that night, nor did their charioteers sit at the same fire. On the fourth day was the final conflict, and in it Cuchulain after a fight, more furious than ever, had recourse to his enchanted spear, the *gae bulga*, made out of dragon's bones; and with it he pierced through armour and through flesh so that Ferdia was filled with its barbs.

"The end is come now indeed," said Ferdia. "I fall by that."

And for a last courtesy of all Cuchulain caught the swooning warrior, and bore him across the ford to his own side "so that the slain man might be on the north of the ford," and not left on the hither side of the crossing he had struggled for. It was then that Cuchulain spoke the beautiful lay, which remembers the days of comradeship, and laments over the triumph that has been won.

I shall not attempt to give the whole story of the Táin, which closes with the rally of the Ultonians from their swoon, the defeat and dispersal of Maeve's army, and the dramatic death of the two famous bulls. The epic or saga, with its collateral sagas, comes down to us in the form of prose freely interspersed with poetry; for the Irish was the first among primitive literatures to adopt prose, not verse, as its medium

for narrative. We have the epic in the form of various transcripts, made in the twelfth century and later, but doubtless all copied or modified from previously existing versions. Translations of these are accessible in Miss Hull's *Cuchulin Saga*, Miss Faraday's *Cattle Raid of Cuailgne*, and Mr. Leahy's *Heroic Romances of Ireland*; and much critical information is given in the introductions to these works. But for those who simply wish to read in the most attractive literary form what is told of Cuchulain and his compeers, by far the best book is Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, where the whole cycle is rendered as a harmonious whole, through the medium of an easy musical English, with a hint running through it of Irish idiom, as it is heard in the speech of those parts where men have thought habitually in Irish.

In it may be found a beautiful description of the palace at Emain Macha—"a fine palace it was, having three houses in it, the Royal House and the Speckled House, and the House of the Red Branch." In the Royal House "the walls were made of red yew with copper rivets," but in Conchobar's own room the walls were faced with bronze wrought with silver on it, and gold birds with jewelled eyes. All this may prove only the standard of decorative ideas which prevailed in the twelfth century, but it indicates the type of a civilisation which was indigenous. Archbishop Healy (in his *Life of St. Patrick*) expresses a view that the Royal House stood away from Emain

Macha, near the present town, and that the college of the Druids was close by it. Emain itself he considers to have been a sort of glorified barrack, with its House of the Red Branch where Conchobar's fighting men assembled. Each of these had his appointed place at table under his own device, and all sat with backs to the wall so that no man could be taken unawares. But as a further precaution, all weapons were stored in the Speckled House, which was so called by reason of the flecked brightness of the weapons shining in it.

In the famous story of Deirdre and the sons of Usnach, it is told how when Naisi and his brothers came to Emain against all Deirdre's warnings, and struck with a knocker on the door of the enclosure, Deirdre warned them for a last time how they should know if treachery was intended. If they were admitted to the house where Conchobar and his nobles were feasting, all would be well ; but if they were lodged in the House of the Red Branch, fate impended. And it was into the House of the Red Branch that they were conducted.

Deirdre's story is the one which clings for ever about Emain. At Emain Macha, indeed, Cuchulain performed his boy-feats, and he is the true centre of the Red Branch cycle ; yet it is rather over the level plain of Muirthemne, about Dundalk, and over the Ford of Ferdia at Ardee, that his memory hovers. The ghosts that haunt the old rath should be those of Naisi, Ainli, and Ardan, and of the men they slew

before they themselves fell, whether under enchantment, or (as the oldest account tells) by mere sudden treachery ; and of the too beautiful woman, the bane and ruin of Ulster, for whom Conchobar forswore plighted honour and brought schism into the Red Branch.

Yet, though Conchobar is the villain of that famous story, Christian legend dealt kindly with him. He had one birth-hour with Christ ; and it is said also that his death fell along with the Crucifixion. When a Druid revealed to him what was being done in the Eastern world, he ran out in fury, and fell to hewing at trees, as if they were Christ's tormentors, till with rage an old wound in his skull burst open, and he fell dead. In this way he is recorded as the first in Ireland who believed ; but many other shapings have been given to this story. One, which I heard in Donegal from Seumas MacManus, seemed to me of extraordinary beauty.

In this version Conall Cearnach, next hero after Cuchulain and Fergus, after wandering the world for adventure had come home, and was telling in the House of the Red Branch of all he had seen. And he told them how the strangest of all that ever happened to him was beside a city of the Eastern world, where, as he approached, a multitude was assembling on a hill ; and it was three malefactors they were punishing. They were raising them on beams of wood, and as Conall looked, it seemed to him that the face of one man of them could not be justly punished ;

and rage burst out in his heart at thought of the injustice that was being done. He drove his way through to the foot of the cross, ready to draw his sword, to sweep the rabble before him and rescue the wrongfully condemned. But as he stood in act to draw it, a drop of blood from the crucified fell on his breast. And then, said Conall, I know not why, all rage departed from me.

However, that is later embroidery on the old legends. Yet those who collect Irish lore are glad to-day to find any trace of the Red Branch cycle in men's minds. The later Fenian stories have taken hold of the popular imagination, obscuring the earlier group. An instance came across me the other day. Loop Head, in Clare, is properly Leap Head ; and the Irish is *Léim Cuchulain* (Cuchulain's Leap) because a story tells how Cuchulain, seeking to escape from a mistress who wearied him, ran to the promontory and leapt out across the broad chasm on to a precipitous island of rock which was just off the land. The woman followed, but he leapt back, and she, trying again to follow, got her death. I asked an old countryman near Kilkee the Irish of Loop Head. "*Ceann Léime*," he said. "Whose *Léim?*" I asked. "The leap of Diarmuid and Gráinne," he answered. And he went on to tell me the story with persons changed, though, as every Irish speaker should know, Gráinne outlived Diarmuid—not to her credit.

Yet if Mr. MacNeill's theory be right, this confusion of Red Branch story with the Fenian sagas

is only the repetition of an old injustice. Conchobar MacNessa and the rest are all represented as Milesian heroes, whereas in truth they belonged to a wholly different race. Let us consider the facts as he states them. The Milesians, he holds, settled in the Boyne valley about the end of the first century and gradually extended their conquests over the central plain. In the fourth century they must have been pushing further afield ; for we read that in A.D. 321 the three Collas, kinsmen of Muiredach, ruler of Tara, invaded Ulster, drove the Ultonians out of the country about Lough Neagh into the north-eastern corner of Ireland, and utterly destroyed the buildings of Emain, so that after that day no king of Ireland lived there. Thus, according to tradition, was fulfilled the curse laid upon Conchobar MacNessa for his treachery to the sons of Usnach ; but it took three centuries to fulfil itself.

Historically, there appears to be no doubt of this conquest : and historically also it is known that Dalriada and Dalaradia, the two divisions of Antrim, were inhabited by people differing in race from the Milesian stock. These people were Picts, and presumably Cuchulain and the rest were Picts also. All their legends describe them as chariot-fighters like those whom Cæsar met when he landed in Britain ; whereas the Milesians (adopting Roman tactics, Mr. MacNeill thinks) fought on foot, and perhaps owed their success to this less showy but more effective manner of war.

At all events, when St. Patrick came to Ireland in 432, the palace of Conchobar was laid waste, and had been deserted for more than a hundred years. The Hymn of Fiacc written in Patrick's honour makes a point of this when it says

> "The Sovereignty is in Ardmacha,
> Long ago it departed from Emain."

Already in St. Patrick's day the contrast was present to the mind which to-day forces itself upon the eye; for if you go to Emain Macha, and stand on top of the old fortress, encircled by the great rings of earthworks which still remain, what will impress you most is that view which Mr. Thomson has drawn of the two cathedrals crowning opposite hills.

But the Milesians were not content with taking the sovereignty from Emain; they must needs make legends linking up the Red Branch story with Tara, and invent Milesian affinities with the Pictish heroes of Emain. One story told how Cuchulain's head and his shield were buried there, and the sepulchres were shown among Tara's wonders. Another legend of Christian origin tells how Patrick, in reply to Laoghaire's demand for a proof of miraculous power, conjured up for the king a vision of Cuchulain in his chariot, doing marvellous feats of skill with weapons. And Patrick, too, is represented as having a tenderness for the Red Branch: a verse which the Tripartite

Life assigns to the apostle himself makes this notable lament :

> " It is Armagh that I love,
> My dear thorpe, my dear hill,
> A dún which my soul haunteth :
> Emania of the heroes shall be waste."

His angel, we are told, consoled the saint by saying that Armagh should never be a desert, that his crozier should be there for all time. And both saint and angel willingly identify the Christian city with the old pagan fortress and palace.

Before I leave the story of Emain as distinct from that of Armagh, one very curious incident has to be recorded. In 1387 Niall O'Neill, King of Ulster, erected a building there to comply with the wishes of the literary men of Ireland that he should re-edify Emania. That, if one comes to think, is no bad indication of the state of culture which existed here in the north of Ireland about the time when Chaucer was writing his Canterbury Tales. *Si parva licet componere magnis*, it recalls the proposal made in the days of Augustus to rebuild Troy, for sentimental and literary reasons.

When Patrick reached Armagh a king still reigned there, though in far lesser glory. The kingdom of Oirghialla, or Oriel, had been shorn out from Ulster by the Collas, and their successor was Daire. From him Patrick asked the site for a

church and a monastery where he himself might gather a religious community about him. Historians disagree as to dates, but agree that this happened after Patrick, considering his missionary labours accomplished, had gone to Rome and returned rich in relics and authority. His first request of Daire was for the high ground called Druim Sailech, the Ridge of the Willows. But Daire refused—seeing that this site, on which the old cathedral stands to-day, was higher than that of his own dún. But he granted a site on the lower ground, and there a church was built called Fertæ Martyrum—the Grave of the Martyrs: in which probably the relics were treasured.

I need not tell the whole story of Daire's gradual change of mind and repentance for his first refusal. But one part is too good to be omitted. Daire sent to Patrick a present of a great brazen cauldron "brought from the sea." "*Gratzacham*," said Patrick (that is, *Gratias agam*, let me thank you—written as the words sounded to Irish ears). But Daire knew no Latin, and pondering over the matter, thought he had been slighted.

"'Go,' he said to his servants, 'and bring it back to me again.' They went and told Patrick they were ordered to take home the pot. '*Gratzacham*,' said Patrick, 'take it with you.' 'What did the Christian say to you when you asked for the pot?' said Daire. 'He only said *gratzacham*,' they replied. '*Gratzacham* when it is given,' said Daire, 'and *gratzacham* when it is taken away. The word must be good, bring it back to him again.' And Daire himself went with the messengers, and praised Patrick's

constancy, and said, 'I will give you now that plot, on the Hill of the Willows, which you asked for before. It is yours. Go and dwell there.'"

But Archbishop Healy, from whose translation of the Tripartite Life I have been quoting, thinks another story much more wonderful and interesting. For Patrick and Daire went together to Druim Sailech, and there they found a doe with her fawn lying on the spot where the Protestant cathedral now stands, and where Patrick built his church. Those with Patrick wished to kill the beasts, but the saint forbade; and he himself took the fawn on his shoulders and carried it—the doe following quite tamely and confidently—until he let the fawn loose in a brake situated to the north of Ard Macha, "where even up to our own time," says the writer in the old Tripartite Life, "there are not wanting marvellous signs, as the learned say." "But the greatest sign of all has happened in our own time," says Archbishop Healy. "For this northern hill which in the time of St. Patrick was a wooded brake is now the site of the largest and the most commanding church in Ireland."

It is a sign indeed, and worthy of the closest attention. One hundred and fifty years ago Catholics in Ireland were saying mass on the hillsides; the mass house was absolutely prohibited, and though the law might wink, and did wink, at the performance of Catholic rites, yet it could always be roused into activity. I have told in my

last chapter how in 1737 the Franciscans were expelled from their shelter at Ross Errilly in the remote wilds of Connaught, when individual malice forced the law to take cognisance of their existence. To-day Ireland is full of churches, all of them built within a hundred years—and almost every church, let it be clearly understood, is crowded to the limit of its capacity with worshippers. But here at Armagh is the greatest monument of all—planted as if in defiance so as to dominate the country round and outface that older building on the lesser summit: the costliest church that has been erected within living memory in Ireland; and not that only. It is in good truth a monument not of generous wealth (like the two great cathedrals of Christ Church and St. Patrick's in Dublin) but of devoted poverty: the gift not of an individual but of a race, out of money won laboriously by the Catholic Irish at home and in the far ends of the world. I wonder how many hundred thousands of day labourers gave their mite to its building in the thirty years since the work began.

So viewed, I question whether modern Christianity can show anything more glorious: yet in other aspects the new St. Patrick's Cathedral must sadden the beholder. The stone of which it is hewn, as the money that paid for the hewing, is Irish: but the ideas which shaped the fabric are pure Italian. At Cashel, Cormac's chapel—the one ancient edifice which comes to us intact—springs from the soil of

Ireland like an apple-tree in blossom : this building at Armagh is exotic as a palm. In the great church itself this air of the foreigner is not so striking : but the Archbishop's stately palace is copied straight from a Roman model. What relation has it to the plain manse of the Irish parish priest? It belongs wholly to another order of ideas.

I write this in no spirit of reproach but of historical comment ; it is what every educated man will feel who comes up the great flight of steps from the modest slated town, fully typical of Ireland, and gazes at the high reared front with its two towers ; it is what will be pressed in on his consciousness when he enters and sees all about him the handiwork and the taste of the modern Italian artificer. Then, if he be wise, instead of turning away in haste from what offends as unnative, not fitting, not natural, he will ask a question, Why? And history gives full answer.

The dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 meant the breaking up of all ancient seats of art and learning that still existed in Ireland. For a hundred and fifty years after that Irish Catholics were fighting almost continuously for the bare right to live and practise their religion. The armed struggle was ended by the Treaty of Limerick, and then followed a century of the penal laws. When the era of explicit toleration began, seven generations had elapsed since a mason was legally permitted to lay one stone of a Catholic building on another. Worse than that, for a century education had been denied the Catholics.

It was given contraband by the hedge schoolmasters, and by the ecclesiastics who went abroad to study and returned to exercise their vocation in defiance of the law. Literature lived on, even through these conditions, for the brain of man is a safe hiding-place of treasure ; but the art of the ancient builders died from disusage, and when leave was given to build, the first thought was for bare necessaries. As occasion grew, and means, to lavish upon religious buildings something of splendour, where were Irish Catholics to look for models? About them? Protestants, save in the few cases where they utilised some of the old fabrics, the work of less thrifty builders, had made frugal provision for their own worship. From the whole comity of European Catholic art, Irish Catholics had been cut off. Who can wonder if to-day their outlay shows profusion rather than taste—what they can buy, not what they can create, for the glory of their religion.

Consider the matter in a more personal aspect. Outside the western doorway stand two statues, and one of these is the late Archbishop McGettigan, whose beautiful profile, as I saw it outlined against an evening sky, redeemed the meanness of the sculpture. I remember a near kinswoman of his, born on the same mountain-side above a wild lake in Donegal, who held her head high by reason of her kinship with the prelate, though she was a servant in my father's house. The present heir of St. Patrick (in the Catholic succession) comes from the same county, from the same Irish-speaking moorland fringe ; and

his cousins and nephews to-day are strong and lucky herring-fishers. From such beginnings Archbishop McGettigan and Cardinal Logue climbed the freest of all ladders to that great episcopal throne; and from a cleaner, stronger, more honourable stock I think no blood could be derived. But what chance had these men of general culture? There was no university where education could be accepted, at least by any Catholic designed for the priesthood; but the State, so rigorous in this refusal, thoughtfully provided a theological seminary where they would be drilled and disciplined in the learning of a Roman priest. Everything was done that could be done to make a Roman ecclesiastic; how little care was taken to make a cultivated Irishman! As for the rest of Catholic Ireland, it either did without general education altogether, and minded its commerce, and its law, or its medicine—continuously apprenticed from the day it left school—or else it went, when its conscience permitted, to Trinity College and received the culture which is admirably typified by Protestant Armagh.

For although, as a fierce old Catholic told me gleefully out in the fields by the Yellow Ford, Catholics have now the power in Armagh, and no Orange cock crows on the Corporation and County Council, yet Armagh is moulded into the very image of Irish Episcopalian Protestantism.

Its decent prosperous streets have somehow a different air from those of Catholic Kilkenny—the

only town which can reasonably compare with it, since both are paved with marble. The hotel where I stayed, keeping the memory of two primates in its designation, had something episcopal, handsome and suitable in its outfit. There was a modest entrance, an old hall, antique furniture, and, I was told, old plate, reminiscent of days when the Protestant squirearchy of Ireland would be numerous about the palace. But above all I found the very quintessence of Protestant atmosphere in the decent gentility of the Mall, on whose level expanse, so like a cathedral close, it seemed to me that the cathedral could more suitably be placed. These houses had the very air for an Irish Protestant precinct—solid, square, well-proportioned, discreet work of the eighteenth century, rather chilly in colour, yet suggesting comfort inside. One building was a well-furnished library, where (having mislaid my own copy) I sought for John Mitchell's *Life of Hugh O'Neill*—and did not find it. Mitchell is probably the most remarkable English writer that the north of Ireland ever produced: Hugh O'Neill is certainly a figure not negligible anywhere, and least of all at Armagh; but still, library and librarian knew nothing of the book. That is typical.

Climb the hill to the cathedral, which looms up square and solid over you as you pace the Mall between ranged and respectable elm trees. The cathedral is a little respectable too, and a little squat; but for all that, massive and dignified. The interior is, to my

Armagh.

mind, exactly what a cathedral of the Irish Protestant church should be. Nothing is older than the Boyne; all severe, clear, cold, frugal almost to the point of stinginess in ornament, yet with a creditable attempt here and there in details to keep up the tradition of Irish art. Other Irish tradition, cherished by the body of the modern Irish nation, finds itself represented; here is Molyneux (very cleverly sculptured by Roubiliac), who ranks after Swift in the roll of those early publicists, who championed the cause of decent government for Ireland, and whose books were duly burnt by the hangman. Volunteer flags of the Killymoon battalion recall a moment in Irish history which crowned (for a moment) the ideals of men like Molyneux. And on a brass tablet is engraved the noble scholarly head of the late Dean Reeves—reminding the world of the services which Irish Protestant churchmen have rendered to purely Irish scholarship.

But how characteristic of the old Established Church are the bishops here sculptured, and how unlike the Cardinal and his predecessor! The two Beresfords lie at full length (facing west, as is right), stately, pompous, indistinguishable in their severe haughty profiles—aristocrats who perhaps did more than any two other men to justify the order under which they lived, the order which arranged that a Beresford should always be a bishop if he wanted to be. Something has passed away with those old nobles which, perhaps, is not to be regretted, yet

which had a real nobility. On the north wall, Stuart prays, in Chantrey's very beautiful sculpture—an archbishop of whom no one knew anything, till the other day when the publication of old State papers showed him protesting with passion against one of the most scandalous Union appointments to the bench of bishops—a Beresford's, by the way! His protest was earnest but ineffectual—the protest of a good but not powerful man: leave him there praying.

As for the community over whom these men were bishops—the Protestant gentry of Ulster—their record is legible on these walls. There is a memorial to three Kellys, men of Wellington's day, who fell, one in the West Indies, one in the East Indies, and a third in the Peninsula: a memorial to a young lieutenant Kidd, gloriously slain in the Crimea while trying to drag wounded men into safety. How many of the same breed have died in the same way for England? Flags which they carried, and flags which they captured, decorate the grey aisles.

Again, as before, let us look at persons no less than at places and things. Over to the north, on the Janiculum of this city of the seven hills, stands the great palace—also absolutely typical, not of the democratic Church of Ireland that lives so vigorously to-day, but of the old aristocratic church, whose bishops were chosen expressly from the *bene nati*: a house large, spacious, well-proportioned, speaking of an opulent family life—the fit mansion for one of those lords spiritual who were also well-endowed with all

the temporalities of a rich episcopate. Everything in the great house speaks of a full transmitted culture —not least, the group of portraits with a noble Reynolds among them : and there, appropriate in his great station, sits to-day the last link with the old order, last survivor of the Crown-appointed bishops —than whom Patrick has scarcely had a more eloquent successor.

I write the more boldly of this home of one who has been a kind and honoured friend to me and mine since I can remember anything, because some glimpse of that home and its picturesque old-world surroundings has been afforded to the world in a book full of charm. And not the least pleasant thing in *Lady Anne's Walk* is a passage which gives some hint of the friendly feeling between the rival thrones of Armagh. Miss Alexander has been weaving, after her fashion, out of the city's storied past, some legend to account for a lack of singing birds in Lady Anne's old garden, when, with a gracious turn of her pen, she descends delightfully into an idyll of fact in search for a simpler reason.

"They may be tempted away by a kind old Cardinal who, in black soutane piped with red, and scarlet biretta, can be seen any afternoon spreading breadcrumbs for his feathered neighbours at the top of a fine flight of steps that leads to his fine new Cathedral."

Well—there they are, the two old men ; one of them looking back to a Donegal fishing village and then Maynooth, the other to a north of Ireland rectory, and then the Oxford of Newman's day. What they

have seen! and I wonder what they think of it all. But it is fair to guess that the Primate dwells most willingly in fancy on the dreams and deeds of men in outlying corners of the British Empire who aim at making something new into a part of England; and that Cardinal Logue is constantly cheered by his sympathetic touch with the young force of the Gaelic League, which aims at bringing again into a new flowering that genius of Ireland whose natural growth has been for centuries so stunted and starved and dwindled.

What it was in the days of its first great flowering Armagh should know. "The Irish Church was" (I quote Zimmer) "from the sixth to the ninth century foremost in Western Christendom." Here at Armagh there are still marks of a racial division; but "English Street" and "Scotch Street" mark only the groupings of separate colonists. In the great days when Armagh was a university for Western Europe,

"So great" (says Archbishop Healy) "was the number of students flocking to Armagh in the sixth and seventh centuries that the city came to be divided, for peace sake we presume, into three wards or thirds, named respectively the *Trian Mór*, the *Trian Masain*, and the *Trian Saxon*, the last taking its name from the crowd of students from Saxon-land who took up their abode therein, where, according to the testimony of the Venerable Bede, they were all supplied gratuitously with books, education, and maintenance."

For an extant monument of that time there can be no doubt where to look. There comes to us, from

the school which Patrick established, a manuscript containing the earliest written memoirs of the saint —and Patrick's *Confession* transcribed from Patrick's own writing. I shall tell at some length the story of the Book of Armagh, for it illustrates the history of Ireland from Patrick's day down to our own. Glory and disgrace, treachery and martyrdom, defeat and victory—all these memories cluster about this volume in which so much is eloquent that is not even written.

What, then, is the Book of Armagh? It is first of all a copy of the New Testament in Latin, bound up along with certain Lives, Concordances and Tables—all transcribed in a marvellous penmanship. Yet of more interest to me than the work of the scribe is the rude trace of readers; for the copy is not a whole, completed at one time, but is really a number of volumes; and each group of parchments shows by rubbing and wearing of the outer sheets how it has been carried and handled and pored over, in a day when every single book was a treasure of price: in such days as were when war arose because Saint Columba, entrusted with a book of the Psalms, copied it swiftly and secretly and went off with a new treasure. St. Finnen, who owned the original, appealed to King Diarmuid at Tara. "The calf goes with the cow," said Diarmuid, deciding this early case of copyright. "That is an unjust decision, O King," said Columba, "and I will avenge it on you." The north sided with its own Saint, a battle was

fought at Cuildrevne, near Sligo ; Columba's champions conquered, and the copy was kept. Going down from age to age as a trophy, it was borne into battles whenever the O'Donnells took the field, but now the *Cathach*, or " Warrior Book," reposes peacefully under glass at the National Museum in Dublin.

I must be forgiven that digression : no story in the history of Ireland should be dearer to folk of letters than this early dispute upon copyright. Columcille pirated the manuscript, no doubt ; but Finnen had in it not an author's right, but such privilege as a jealous publisher sometimes claims to-day. All honour to the Cathach—warrior saint and warrior book. But St. Patrick fought with nobody—not so at least as to lead to battle ; though he too had a fiery temper, and the Book of Armagh tells us so.

For the chief interest of that great relic lies not in its text of the Scriptures—though that has a high value for scholars,—but in the documents which it contains bearing on the life and character of Patrick. Chiefest of these is the *Confessio* or spiritual autobiography of the saint, which closes the first division of the Book ; and at the end of it is written : " *Huc usque volumen quod Patricius manu conscripsit sua. Septima decima Martii die translatus est Patricius ad cælos.*" " So far the volume which Patrick wrote with his own hand. On the seventeenth day of March Patrick was translated to heaven."

This does not mean that in the Book of Armagh we have Patrick's autograph. What it does mean is

that Ferdomnach the scribe was transcribing from the original and added this note when he came to the end of what Patrick had written. But in after days, when men had either forgotten, or chose to forget, how the *scriba optimus* of Armagh had been commanded by Archbishop Torbach to prepare for the Church of Armagh this superb transcript of the treasured documents, Armagh asserted boldly that it possessed actually (as the colophon could be interpreted to state) "the volume which Patrick transcribed with his own hand." And—is not this curious? in every place through the Book where the scribe, after the usual fashion, had set his signature in the pious fashion "*Pro Ferdomnacho Ores*," "Pray for Ferdomnach," careful hands went to work, and with knife and sponge obliterated the inscription.

It was a fraud—pious and therefore explicable. By 937 A.D. the Book was so famous that, as we read in the Four Masters, "A case (*Cumhdach*) was provided for the *Canoin Patraicc* by Donnchadh, son of Flann, king of Ireland." The name "Patrick's Canon" implied probably that the text of Scripture was that which Patrick sanctioned: and if the saint's autograph authority could be added, why, so much the better. The *Cumhdach* was doubtless a case of jewelled metal like that in which the Cathach has been preserved: but the Book as we have it to-day is enclosed in a *Pólairé* or satchel of stamped leather, wrought with Celtic design and evidently antique, but probably made originally for some other volume,

as it does not fit exactly. It suggests the processional use of the Book which was certainly borne in state, at peaceful ceremonies, if not in fight like the Cathach ; and the privilege of bearing the relic and of keeping it in safe custody was from early times committed to a special officer—the Maor or Steward, who was rewarded with a grant of eight townlands.

We do not know in whose custody the Book was, thirty years after its completion, when the Danes swooped on Armagh, and Turgesius, their chief, established his court here in the city of Patrick. At all events, the Book escaped the Danes ; they left no mark on its story. Not so their conqueror.

It was a great day for the Maor, and a great day for the Book, when book and bearer were summoned in 1004 to a display before the greatest of all Ireland's rulers. After a long lifetime of war and policy, Brian of the Tribute had at last become High King, and now at the age of sixty-three (yet with the greatest achievement of his life ten years ahead of him) he made a royal progress through his realm. He stayed a week in Armagh, offered a ring of twenty ounces in gold on St. Patrick's altar, and confirmed the customary claims of Patrick's See. His decision stands registered on a page of the Book by his secretary and confessor.

"Saint Patrick when going to heaven decreed that the entire fruit of his labour, as well of baptism and of causes as of alms, should be rendered to the apostolic city which in the Scotic tongue is called Arddmacha. This I have found in the records of the Scots.

(This) I have written, namely, Calvus Perennis, in the presence of Brian, Emperor of the Scots; and what I have written he has determined on behalf of all the kings of Maceria."

It is a vivid picture which rises up as you look at the stained brown page where these characters—barely legible, so many have bent over the book and thumbed it there—stand in the blank corner of a page, in a handwriting wholly different from the body of the text. There is the grey old warrior standing by, wise in battle, wiser still in statecraft, yet unskilled in letters, while his *anm-chara*, or 'soul-friend,' Maolsuthain (whose name, "The Ever Bald," is Latinised as Calvus Perennis), sits entering the record with due care on the volume—already so venerable. Notice that the sovereignty has departed from Tara: Brian speaks for the kings of Maceria, that is "Stone fort"—the Latin equivalent of Cashel.

That was a great day surely for the Book. Yet a greater and sadder came ten years later, after that Good Friday at Clontarf in 1014. From Brian's last battlefield where he finally broke the power of the Danes, the men of Ireland carried him and his son Murrough—the hero of the fight—to Patrick's cathedral: and who can doubt that more than once in those solemn obsequies, which lasted twelve days and nights, the Book was borne in sad state before the great king's coffin? After that date the history of Ireland is overcast and the Book shared in the national fortunes. There was dissension in Armagh in 1134, and St. Malachy O'Morgair drove out

Niall son of Aedh from the see : but Niall carried with him in flight the *Canoin Patraicc* and that other great relic, the *Bachal Isa*, or Staff of Jesus : and the possession of them being nine points of the law in his favour, he was able to return.

In 1179, an O'Rogan took an oath on the Book, forswore himself, was exiled for the offence, and died suddenly. It is easy to see where O'Rogan and many others took their oath by laying a hand on the volume ; for two pages at which it naturally falls open are rubbed and discoloured almost past reading.

Veneration for the relic was not confined to the Irish. In 1177 when John de Courcy, Earl of Ulster, captured Downpatrick, the Primate was in the fort, and the Book was in the Primate's train. But soon after, de Courcy restored the Book to Armagh—I should not wonder, however, if he kept the precious *Cumhdach*. The Book, at all events, was safe with its hereditary custodians, who had by this time acquired a surname from their duty—MacMhaoir, which is Englished sometimes MacMoyre, sometimes Wyre. The name does not survive to-day, but there are good grounds for believing that it was deliberately abandoned : for the record of the MacMoyres ends in the blackest infamy.

On June 29th, 1662, Florence MacMoyre, then steward or keeper, wrote his name in the Book on a blank page—"*Liber Florentini Muire*," with the date in Latin. This Florence was cousin of John Mac-Moyre, a Franciscan friar of ill-repute whom Oliver

Plunket, then Archbishop of Armagh, had suspended for various crimes; and the unfrocked friar, seeking to injure the Archbishop, "often avowed his determination to bring him to the scaffold," and "could find no other names for him than Elymas, Barjesus, Simon Magus *and Oliver Cromwell!*" The political circumstances lent a ready machinery. In Ireland MacMoyre tried accusations and failed before a jury at Dundalk: but in the London of Titus Oates's day a fairer field lay open. An Irish Popish plot had to be invented to back up the English fabrication, and Shaftesbury sent over agents to suborn testimony. These recruited first John MacMoyre and afterwards his cousin Florence, the keeper. But they omitted to provide travelling money, and, to raise this, Florence pawned the Book for five pounds.

Among them they swore away Plunket's life, though it is hardly to be supposed that the court believed their testimony. Jeffreys, who prosecuted, was careful to allow the Archbishop neither time nor means to establish his innocence: and so was perpetrated a most infamous judicial murder. Little good it did the perjurers; they were detained in prison, starving and unpitied, and when at last Florence Wyre got home, he could not afford to redeem his pledge. In 1707 it was in the possession of Mr. Brownlow in county Down—a Protestant gentleman who showed intelligence and care. He—as we learn from Edward Lhwyd, the antiquarian, who saw it with him—put in order the scattered leaves, numbered and headed them,

and caused them to be rebound in their old cover. With the Brownlow family it remained for six generations, till in 1846 the then owner generously deposited it in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy for the use of students. In 1853 it was bought by Dr. Reeves for £300, but by him ceded to the Primate Lord John George Beresford, who made it over as a gift to Trinity College.

Such is the story of the actual volume: it must be completed by some view of the services it has rendered to scholars. The opening document contains the two earliest Lives of Saint Patrick, written respectively by Muirchu and Tirechan between the years 660 and 700. Probus, who wrote a Life in the tenth century, may have used this Book: and almost certainly the monk Jocelin, author of another biography, did so. For Jocelin was a monk of Chester, transferred about 1183 to Down under the auspices of de Courcy: and he tells us that he began to write at the instance of de Courcy, who had a special affection for St. Patrick,—and who, as we have seen, had for some time been in possession of the Book. From that date onward, for a matter of four centuries, there was little thought and leisure for art or literature, scholarship or theology, within the four seas of Ireland. In the pause between the wars of Elizabeth and the wars of Cromwell, letters began to be thought of again—in a very new aspect. It was now the English divine Ussher—greatest of all the Protestant Primates—who began to investigate curiously the

Religion of the Ancient Irish. He saw and used this book (still in the custody of its hereditary keepers) about 1630, and Muirchu and Tirechan afford the earliest materials for Irish history known to him. But from Ussher's day until the revival of interest in Irish study about a century ago, the Book lay by, a mere curiosity. In 1827 the Patrician documents which it contained were first published in print by Sir William Betham. Petrie, O'Donovan, and Monck Mason drew on the original; and finally when it was placed in the Royal Irish Academy a great scholar went to work on it. Dr. Charles Graves (not yet Bishop of Limerick), by extraordinary acuteness and observation, determined absolutely the date and name of the scribe. O'Curry had noticed the erased entries: Graves succeeded in deciphering at one point the name Ferdomnach, and in another he read thus much:

. . . . ACH HUNC . . . . M DICTANTE
. . . . ACH HEREDE PATRICII SCRIPSIT.

The first lacunæ were easily filled "*Ferdomnach*" (whose signature had been deciphered elsewhere) *hunc librum*"; That is: "Ferdomnach wrote this book at the dictation of . . . . ach, the successor of Patrick."

If Ferdomnach were placed, it would be easily decided who was the Archbishop of his day: but the annals mentioned two Ferdomnachs, both eminent scribes. But with one only of these was there an Archbishop contemporary whose name ended in

ach—Torbach, whose primacy began and ended in 807. It followed, then, that the writing was begun and ended in that year by the second Ferdomnach; and since in a marginal note at the end of Matthew's gospel this scribe tells us that he finished copying that gospel on the feast of the saint, we can date the writing of this colophon absolutely to September 21st, 807. By such means knowledge is built up.

Since Graves's day scholars, Protestant and Catholic, lay and ecclesiastical, have found employment on the Book: but the complete edition and reproduction of it is not yet given to the world. This work has been long in doing: Reeves was accumulating material for it during nearly half a century, and he it was who ascertained practically all the strange history of the manuscript. Since his death in 1892 the task has been handed over—along with his notes—to another scholar of whom it does not become his son to speak. Yet I think that the spirit of Ferdomnach, *scriba optimus*, whose patient, unwearying, ungrudging skill diffused itself over every line of his great task, shirking nothing, scamping nothing, might confidently be called up to sit in judgment on the labours of this later day.

I have told the Book's story, not, I hope, without affording some glimpse of the vicissitudes of Irish learning. Now before I turn to some of the events which filled the centuries of warfare, let me complain of a hardship. In all of Irish history since the Normans landed, only two really great defeats were inflicted by

our people on the English ; and either of them is a subject on which an Irish pen would willingly enlarge.

Bridge over Oona River.

Yet both took place within one small district, and that district is in the near neighbourhood of Armagh—where there is already too much to write about. However, some account must be given of the valley of the

Blackwater—the cockpit of Ulster during the Elizabethan wars.

In that long-drawn-out struggle the North was the last to be subdued. English power only slowly and tentatively pushed itself through the gap in the northern mountains, to the O'Neills' country about Armagh. Shane O'Neill once burnt city and cathedral to the ground—one of Armagh's sixteen burnings; yet the English came back; and, after the Desmond wars had made the peace of desolation throughout Munster, Elizabeth's statesmen forced Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone—then ostensibly a loyal subject—to permit the erection of a strong fort on the Blackwater, at Portmore, now Blackwater town, about five miles north of Armagh. O'Neill's own stronghold was at Dungannon on the south-west of Lough Neagh: and issuing thence in 1595 he razed Portmore to the ground. In the next year his kinsman, Con O'Neill, captured Armagh by a stratagem, and dismantled the place; yet it was not held, and the English reoccupied it and soon renewed the fortifications. For in these wars the English were disciplined and equipped soldiers, fighting men who had neither ordnance nor skill in the use of any machinery of war; and behind the English was a great though grudging treasury, behind O'Neill only the wealth of his tribe in cattle. The English worked like men building a dyke across a river: now and then a fierce flood would come and sweep all away; but the work began again, relentlessly. In 1597 an English army

under De Burgh advanced to re-occupy Portmore. O'Neill drew them across the river, skirmishing past Benburb till finally he defeated them at Drumfliuch, near to where Battleford Bridge now stands. But the garrison had been established in Portmore, and there, under one Captain Williams, it resisted all efforts to dislodge it. In the summer of 1598 these efforts became fierce: yet the Irish had neither skill nor material for reducing fortified places, and were obliged to content themselves with blockade. Gradually the tough garrison were being starved out; but a great army was known to be preparing, and O'Neill made ready for it. Red Hugh O'Donnell, most brilliant of Irish chiefs, came from Tyrconnell to take a hand in the fight; men were busy deepening ditches and "plashing" the track which led from Armagh to Portmore. In the fort Williams "had his eyes twisted in his head with looking for the red flag," as an Irish historian puts it; and at last the relieving force came, on the ninth of August. Bagenal led them, whose sister O'Neill had carried off from Newry to be his wife: the armies met on the ground which O'Neill had chosen and prepared, at the Yellow Ford, about two miles north of Armagh; and in a few hours Bagenal was slain, and the English in disordered retreat, having suffered the greatest reverse experienced by them in that century.

You can cross the Yellow Ford to-day without knowing water to be in it; a mere culvert under the roadway leads off the drainage from what was once a

deep bog with trenches full of stained oozings from some iron deposit, but now is reclaimed land. The name even is forgotten by most, but the townland is still Bagenalstown: and I found one man at least to whom the past was living. His little holding lay on the south side of the passage, and on the west of the road: and he pointed eastward to the ridge of bumpy hills dividing us from Armagh. Over there, he said, Bagenal reached Grange Church by sunrise; it was eleven o'clock when he attacked the first line of trenches, down in the hollow. Further east, all was a big bog, out of which in living memory a stream flowed which turned two mills: and on the slope rising beyond the Yellow Ford two lines of entrenchment used to be traceable where to-day some farm houses stand. According to him, the English got as far as the entrenchments, but were driven back into the bog.

A full account of the battle can be found in Mitchell's brilliant little book, easily procurable anywhere except in the libraries of Armagh. I was more interested in my informant than in his information. He had no Irish, remembered no trace of Irish in that county; only that he had had friends out of Monaghan who used to say their prayers in Irish. Emain Macha was of no interest to him: but he was keenly alive to the fact that his forefathers were pure Irish, and followers of the O'Neills. His mind was filled with the war of two races—a war not yet ended. For him the cause of the Catholics and the cause of Ire-

land were identical, and he would trust no Protestant. He had been warned not to trust Parnell, he had trusted him : what had come of it ? It must be Catholics for Catholics in future ; the other side never made the mistake of trusting men not of their own religion. Bigotry, in his opinion, had never been fiercer than at present. That is the type of mind which you find in Ireland in any place where Catholics and Protestants are equally enough divided to maintain faction fights : and it will prevail until Protestants are willing to take their place as the natural equals and not the natural superiors of their Catholic neighbours. Yet even through it all there runs neighbourliness, and here is a proof of it. In 1898 the three hundredth anniversary of *Beul an Atha Buidhe* (the Yellow Ford) was celebrated here, and my friend was asked for the loan of his field for the proceedings. "Where will ye put your cows the morrow?" his Protestant neighbour asked him. My friend said he would put them "up by, along the road." "Ye will not," said the Protestant. "Is it to have them scairt to death with the bands and drums and the like of that trash that will be coming down out of the town? Ye'll put them in with my cows, to the back of the hill here, and let them stay till you fetch them yoursel'." And on the day of the celebration, my friend said, there were as many Protestants as Catholics in it, and you would not tell one from the other. So perhaps after all, he overstates the bigotry.

At Blackwater town I could find no trace of the

fort, nor tradition of it : but I met a stray labouring man on the bridge who knew all about Benburb, where I was going, and it was he who suggested to me the very picturesque route which I followed. Short of Benburb, I turned down a steep hill to the left, crossed a bridge, and took to the canal track. It was a longish journey between river and canal, but it repaid me. The canal was remarkable in itself, rising by a rapid succession of locks—the steepest gradient, a bargeman told me, in all the great and neglected system of Irish waterways.

The chief beauty of that walk was the cliff of Benburb, steep to over the river on the northern bank, and crowned with a noble ruin of castle once belonging to the O'Neills. Yet I was more interested in the mills which nestled below it : for Benburb is now a thriving industrial centre. This stretch of river, with three factories or mills on two miles of it, made me realise the sharp conflict which goes on through the whole basin draining into Lough Neagh, between fishery laws and economic requirements. All these rivers running into the great inland sea are spawning grounds for salmon, and the Bann fisheries are of immense value. Government has to make a choice between the fishing and the milling, for every millowner is fighting for every extra inch that can be put on to his weir : and on that dry day in autumn I could not conceive how a salmon ever struggled up. Yet I saw a fish jump beyond all the obstacles, beyond Battleford Bridge, in the deep stretch

where the little river Oona meets the Blackwater, just beside the angle of meadow into which, if Mr. Taylor is right, Owen Roe penned the Scotch Cromwellian army about sunset on the 4th of June, 1646, and hurled men and horses promiscuously into the unfordable waters.

I am not going now to write of Owen O'Neill, Tyrone's illustrious nephew, the mirror of chivalry and honour, the best soldier who ever fought for Ireland, the first of her sons who ever fought not for a clan or a province but for a nation : the man whose untimely death was the worst of all casual misfortunes that ever fell on that most unlucky country. Mr. Taylor's little book is excellent and is cheap, and who ever goes to Benburb should have it in one pocket and Mitchell's *O'Neill* in the other. But I will add here one incident of the day of Benburb which might fire the dullest imagination.

The Franciscan friars were established in Armagh somewhere before 1260, and at what date they were driven out of their friary (whose ruins are now a beautiful object in the palace grounds) we do not definitely know, except that in 1551 soldiers were garrisoned there. Yet they still fluttered about their ancient abode ; in 1565 two friars were flogged to death by English soldiers : in 1575, another, a very old man, after being beaten with clubs was hanged with his own cord. For their greater safety Hugh O'Neill moved them in 1587 to Brantry, in what was then a thickly wooded district between the left

Meeting of the Oona and Blackwater.

bank of the Oona and the Blackwater. Here during the persecutions they had peace, and could offer shelter to fugitives. Owen Roe in the early days of his Irish campaigning, before he had got together the disciplined force which shattered Munroe's veterans, sheltered here for a night in 1643, when in retreat before the enemy. Next day, Sir Robert Stewart, hot on the track, set fire to the friary where his quarry had rested. That was an ugly omen for the friars to remember on the 4th of June three years later. All day long they could see the smoke of the battle drawing near to them; for O'Neill was deliberately and slowly falling back before the assailants from Caledon along the north bank of the Blackwater—drawing Munroe to the place where he wished to see him. But the friars would not know that. They would only know that the battle was approaching and that the Irish were in retreat. So it endured through the day. O'Neill's decisive onslaught was only delivered when the low sun was full in the eyes of his opponents; and night fell on that wild work. The friars were still watching and waiting, till near midnight. Then their dogs began to bark clamorously: some one was coming, many people were coming, feet were loud on the gravel, there was knocking at the gate. They heard the gate opened, they heard cries in the passage—shouts of triumph and rejoicing; and into the quiet convent streamed the leaders of the Irish army, Owen himself at the head of them, with his chaplain Friar

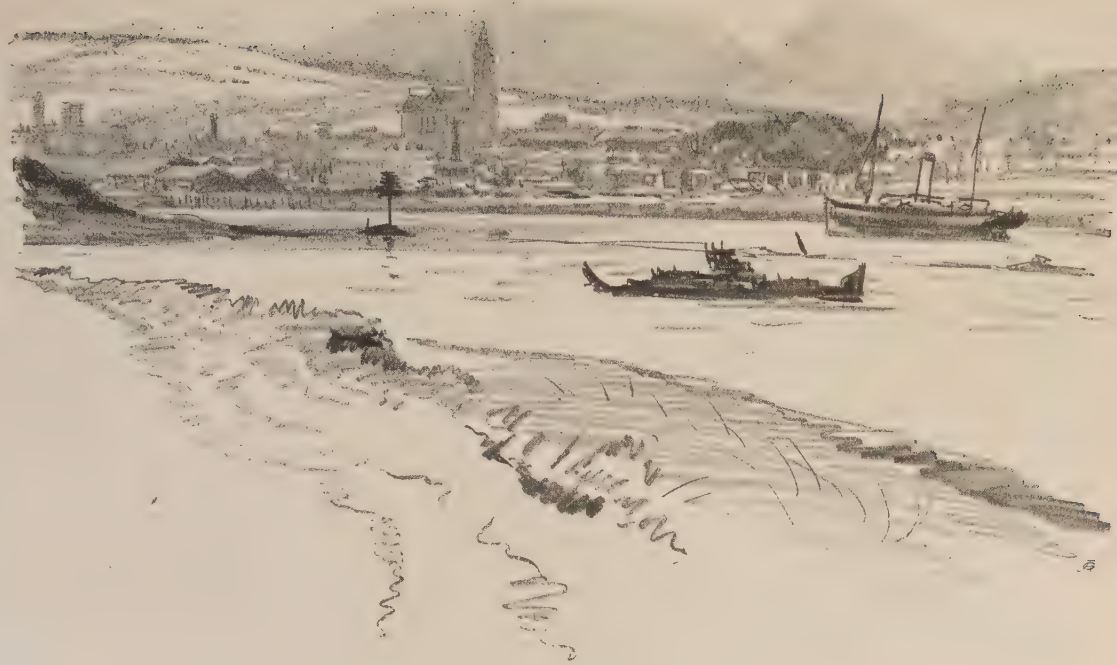
Boetius Egan, who had gone out that morning from the convent, and who had stood all day in the front of the fight. Along the walls of the corridors men, bloodstained and dusty, ranged bloodstained and dusty trophies—thirty-one colours and a standard taken from the enemy. They sang *Te Deum* that night in the quiet woods of Brantry.

CHAPTER V

SLIGO AND BENBULBEN

It has to be admitted that there is sometimes rain in Ireland. Two such times coincided with my visits to Sligo ; and perhaps it is as well, for this chapter can be somewhat less lengthy than others.

What rests in my mind is the impression of a prosperous but lazy-looking town, with solid well-built grey and white houses, and a broad river curving through it, so that the spacious streets are always leading to one bridge or other. The port, which must be a place of some traffic—for Sligo is one of the few Irish towns with an increasing population—I left unvisited : I saw only a far off view of the long estuary : but with the river I made pretty thorough acquaintance, for it is easily and pleasantly known. Trailing a minnow, you will paddle up to Lough Gill in about an hour, and in your progress may catch two or three small jack, possibly no doubt, a big one ; but anyhow pike are so plentiful that one of the most beautiful lakes in Ireland is negligible for the flyfisher. The river, so broad and



Sligo Port and the Ox Mountains.

placid between its sedgy banks and the rich wooding behind them, is a kind of prelude to Lough Gill: a gentle poetic access, broadening gradually, till almost without perceiving it you have reached the opening of long vistas, of wide island-studded expanses with mountains heaving up behind them. But the special beauty of river, lake, and islands lies in the wooding. Except at Killarney I have never seen it equalled. Ilex is everywhere, and down by the water's edge, when I was there last autumn, spindle and dogwood made patches, ruddy or crimson. Every corner has been planted by owners who loved varied foliage, and who found here a soil and climate answerable to all hopes. Your boatman (it is scarcely possible that you can escape Mr. Roderic Gallagher), besides dilating copiously on the beauties of the lake, will point you on the north-western shore to the flat-capped hill of Breffny, which is called O'Rourke's table: will remind you how Dervorguilla fled from the O'Rourke with Dermot MacMurrough; and will, if you allow him, declaim "The valley lay smiling before me," with a fervour that should endear him to all who value the memory of Moore.

> "There was a time, falsest of women,
> When Breffni's good sword would have sought
> That man through a million of foemen
> Who dared but to wrong thee in thought."

So it goes. Yet I confess that in the large and stormswept landscapes of western Ireland—which

Moore never saw—Moore's poetry seems strangely out of place. Breffny can be turned "to favour and to prettiness," but only by one who knows and loves the country. Here is a verse which might well tempt one to explore the many-folded bights and creeks and recesses that make up Sligo Bay.

"The great waves of the Atlantic sweep storming on their way,
Shining green and silver with the hidden herring shoal;
But the little waves of Breffny have drenched my heart in spray,
And the little waves of Breffny go stumbling through my soul."

But at Sligo, thoughts of modern literature would naturally turn to a more important talent than Miss Eva Gore Booth's: for here Mr. W. B. Yeats was born and bred, and many a harmonious name from this countryside is woven into the shimmering fabric of his verses—Dromahair, Collooney, Lisadill, and a score of others. Little wonder that his imagination should be fairy-haunted and filled with the legendary past of Ireland; for about Sligo are very cities of the ancient dead. At Carrowmore is found such a group of cairns, cromlechs, and stone circles as has no parallel in these islands: and in the Hazelwood deer park, trilithons like those of Stonehenge mark some place of august ceremonial or interment. Where such things are in Ireland there is also great store of legend. But at Sligo imagination has been busy chiefly with the two mountains, which from north and south overlook the town. Easily known is the southern, Knocknarea; for on top, conspicuous wherever its

summit can be seen against the sky, is a vast cairn with which men still link the name of Maeve. But the fierce Queen, who led the hosting of Connaught into Ulster in quest of the Brown Bull, is here no human personage but a ruler of the *Sidhe*; and under no other leadership than Maeve's, I fancy.

> "The host is riding from Knocknarea
> And over the grave of Clooth-na-bare,
> Caoilte tossing his flaming hair
> And Niamh calling, 'Away, come away.'"

Mr. Yeats indeed knows, no one better, that Maeve belongs to an older cycle of story than Caoilte MacRonan, or the beautiful Niamh; but he knows also that popular imagination has blended her into that group of heroic figures whose fame has encroached on the glories of the Red Branch, and who made the theme of his first published volume. *The Wanderings of Oisin* modernises an episode taken from the cluster of sagas which English readers since the day of Macpherson know as "Ossianic," but which in Irish are called Fenian tales. And there is no finer story in all this cluster than that which reaches its tragic close here on the northern mountain, Benbulben.

It is with the Fenian cycle rather than with Sligo that this chapter is properly concerned, and the legend must first be set into its historic position. I have tried to show that the Red Branch stories belong to the first generations of the Christian era, and had their origin in

an older race than that which ruled in Tara. But in the Fenian cycle, Tara is the centre round which legends group themselves, as did the Red Branch tales round Emain Macha. Moreover they are fixed to a definite time.

In the days of the great King Cormac MacArt—about the middle of the third century—there existed in Ireland a body of organised professional fighting men, the Fianna, under the leadership of Fionn MacCumhail—or, as the name is sounded in English, Finn MacCool. There were at other times, and in other places of Scotch and Irish Gaeldom, other bodies of *fianna*; the name means roughly, "braves"; and *fiannaidheacht* is the common word in Irish to-day for telling stories about the famous warriors and battles of ancient pagan Ireland. But the Fenian cycle of story *par excellence* is the group of legends dealing with Finn, his son Ossian, Ossian's son Oscar, and their comrades and rivals, Caoilte MacRonan, Goll MacMorna, Conan Maol (the Bald), and a score of others; of whom the foremost for beauty and swiftness and the love of women was Diarmuid son of Duibhne, otherwise called Diarmuid Donn (the Brown-haired) and Diarmuid of the Love Spot. What historic reality lies behind the legends must be enquired later; for the present let us tell the story which links the names of Finn and Diarmuid for ever with Benbulben, abridging it from Mr. Standish Hayes O'Grady's translation of two manuscripts, one copied in 1780 by a county

Waterford schoolmaster, and the other in 1842 by a native of Kilrush in county Clare.

One morning, at Almhuin (Knockaulin, in county Kildare), where was the fortified camp of the Fianna (an immense rath, existing to this day), Finn was up by daybreak, and Ossian, with Diorruing, another of Finn's people, asked the cause of such early rising. "I am without a wife since Maighneis died," said Finn, "and no man has slumber or sweet sleep who is without a fitting wife." Then Diorruing said that he could name a fit mate for the chief, and that was Gráinne, the daughter of King Cormac. Finn answered that there was strife between him and Cormac (for the Fianna were allies rather than servants of Cormac or of any King), and that he would not ask to be refused. Then Ossian[1] and Diorruing undertook to make a journey on their own account, and bear the refusal themselves if it were to be borne; and so they came to Tara. Cormac welcomed them, but, when they told their errand, he answered that there was not a king's son or battle-champion in Ireland to whom Gráinne had not given refusal, that the reproach all fell on him, and therefore, that they must get her tidings from herself. So he conducted them to Gráinne's *grianan*, or windowed

[1] This name in the north of Ireland is pronounced much as Macpherson spelt it; but in the other provinces, according to the Irish spelling, *Oisin*, Usheen. In writing English I prefer to use the generally accepted form,—though the Irish has great charms for a rhymer, and Mr. Yeats employs it.

sunny chamber, in the rath at Tara which still bears her name, and told her of their purpose. And the Princess answered : "If he be a fitting son-in-law for thee, why should he not be a fitting husband for me?" After that, a tryst was made for a fortnight from that night.

The seven battalions of the Fianna were gathered from all quarters of Ireland to Tara for that great wedding, and they went into the banqueting hall whose seven hundred feet of length can be paced out, and whose doorways can be distinguished on the green hilltop to-day. Cormac sat at the head of the hall, and his wife at his left shoulder, and Gráinne at her left again ; and Finn sat on the King's right, and Ossian at Finn's right, and the chiefs of the Fianna were ranged beyond Ossian, and over against them were Cairbre Liffechair, Cormac's heir, and the other chiefs and princes of the royal house.

Then Gráinne, as she sat, held talk with a Druid-poet of the Fianna, and to him she said that it was a wonder Finn asked her for himself and not for Ossian ; "for it were fitter to give me to such as he than to a man that is older than my father." The poet told her it would be ill for her if such a saying were heard from her. So she said no more of that, but she questioned him of the names of the Fianna who sat before her, and he did not fail to answer. She asked of this one and that, and lastly, "Who," she asked, "was the freckled, sweet-worded man, who had the curling, dusky black hair and cheeks berry-red?"

That, he said, was Diarmuid "the white-toothed, of the lightsome countenance, the best lover of women and of maidens that was in the whole world." Then Gráinne sent for a jewelled cup from her grianan, and she mixed a drink in it, and she sent it to Finn and to Cormac, and to the Queen Mother, and to Cairbre Liffechair, and the princes of the King's house; and upon each one, as they drank, there came "a stupor of sleep and deep slumber." When they were all sleeping she rose up from her chair, and came and laid bonds of obligation on Diarmuid that he should take her away with him. "Why have you done this?" said Diarmuid. Then she told them how from the window of her grianan she had seen a hurling match between the Fianna and the men of Tara, and Diarmuid winning the goal in it; "and" (she said) "I turned the light of mine eyes and of my sight upon thee that day, and I never gave that love to any other from that time to this, and will not ever." Then she went out, making a tryst with him to follow her; and Diarmuid took counsel with his comrades. Ossian and Oscar told him that he must abide by the bonds she had laid on him, for he was bound to refuse no woman. "I say," said Caoilte, "that I have a fitting wife, and yet I had rather than the wealth of the world it had been to me that Gráinne gave that love." "Follow Gráinne," said Diorruing, "though thy death will come of it, and I grieve for it." "Is that the counsel of you all to me?" said Diarmuid. "It is," said Ossian and all the others together. Then Diarmuid

rose up and, weeping, took his farewell of the Fianna ; for from that day he must be a hunted man.

And now the story tells of his flight with Gráinne from Tara to Athlone on the Shannon, and his crossing into Clanricarde, and of the tracking by Finn's trackers, and of many escapes when Angus of the Tuatha de Danann came out of his dwelling in Brugh na Boinne to shelter his foster son ; of their travellings from place to place through the length and breadth of Ireland, and their restings, marked in popular imagination by the cromlechs or giants' graves. Perhaps a score of these, from Ben Edair on Dublin Bay, north to Donegal, and south again to Kerry, are called *leabuidh Diarmuid agus Gráinne*, "the bed of Diarmuid and Gráinne." Men of Lochlann were sent by Finn to take the fugitives—since the Fianna were half-hearted in the pursuit—but Diarmuid defeated them, part by subtlety and part by sheer fighting. And at last Oscar sided with Diarmuid, and the two made such havoc of Finn's people that Angus of Brugh easily made peace between chief and rebel : and Diarmuid was granted his own lands, as well as Keshcorran in Sligo for a dowry with the King's daughter. And on the round hill of Keshcorran, where bones of elk and bear are found in the caves of the Fenians, Diarmuid and Gráinne settled down and lived for a space rich and prosperous with house and herds and children.

But in the end Gráinne was not content with what

she had, and she told Diarmuid it was a shame to be said that the two best men in Ireland had never set foot in their house—namely, Fionn, son of Cumhaill, and Cormac, son of Art.

"They are enemies to me," said Diarmuid. "Give them a feast and win their love," said Gráinne. "I permit that," said Diarmuid. And the chiefs of Eire, and the seven battalions of the Fianna, came and were feasting for a year at Rathgráinne in Keshcorran.

On the last night of that year Diarmuid was sleeping, when he heard the voice of a strange hound, and three times it woke him, and at last he went out to seek it. Gráinne bid him take his surest weapons, the Sword of Manannan the Sea God, and the *Ga Derg*, the spear that never missed its cast. But he took lighter weapons of the chase, and out with him till he reached the top of Benbulben, and there he found Finn standing alone.

"It is the wild boar of Benbulben they are hunting," said Finn, "and he has slain thirty of the Fianna this morning. Let us leave the hill to him." "I will not do that," said Diarmuid. Then Finn said that this was no hunt for Diarmuid; for this boar was an enchanted beast, and the doom on it was, to have the same length of life as Diarmuid O'Duibhne. "I knew nothing of that spell," said Diarmuid. Then Finn went away from Diarmuid and refused to leave with him the hound Bran.

"'By my word,' quoth Diarmuid, 'it is to slay me thou hast made this hunt, O Finn; and if it be here I am fated to die, I have no power now to shun it.'"

Then he remembered Gráinne's counsel, and wished for the *Ga Derg* : and in truth when the boar came, weapons broke on him. Diarmuid, leaping to avoid his charge, lit on his back, and was carried down the mountain and up it again, and at last the boar threw him and ripped his bowels ; but with a last throw of the sword hilt Diarmuid dashed out the beast's brains. There beside the carcase he lay bleeding, and Finn and the Fianna came up to him.

"'It likes me well to see thee in that plight, O Diarmuid,' quoth Fionn; 'and I grieve that the women of Erin are not gazing now upon thee; for thy excellent beauty is turned to ugliness, and thy choice form to deformity.' 'Nevertheless it is in thy power to heal me, O Fionn,' said Diarmuid, 'if it were thine own pleasure to do so.' 'How should I heal thee?' said Fionn. 'Easily,' quoth Diarmuid, 'for when thou didst get the noble precious gift of divining at the Bóinn, it was given to thee that to whomsoever thou shouldst give a drink from the palms of thy hands he should after that be young and sound from any sickness.' 'Thou hast not deserved it of me that I should give thee that drink,' quoth Fionn. 'That is not true,' said Diarmuid."

And as he lay, he called to mind how when Finn was beleaguered and his house in flames, he himself went out alone and routed the enemy.

"'And had it been that night that I asked thee for a drink thou wouldest have given it me, and thou wouldest not have done so more justly than now.'

"'That is not true,' said Finn, 'thou hast ill deserved that I should give thee a drink or do thee any good thing; for the night that thou wentest with me to Tara thou didst bear away Gráinne from me in presence of the men of Erin when thou wast thyself my guard over her in Tara that night.'"

Diarmuid said: "Gráinne put bonds upon me, and the guilt was not mine." And again he reminded Finn of how he had saved Finn himself, and the Fianna, when they were bound and under enchantment.

"'And had I asked a drink of thee that night, O Fionn, I would have gotten it! Many is the strait, moreover, that hath overtaken thee and the Fenians of Erin from the first day in which I came among the Fenians, in which I have perilled my body and my life for thy sake; and therefore thou shouldst not do me this foul treachery. Moreover, many a brave warrior and valiant hero of great prowess hath fallen by thee, nor is there an end of them yet; and shortly there will come a dire discomfiture upon the Fenians, which will not leave them many descendants. Nor is it for thee I grieve, O Fionn, but for Oisin and for Oscar and the rest of my faithful fond comrades. And as for thee, O Oisin, thou shalt be left to lament after the Fenians, and thou shalt sorely lack me yet, O Fionn.'

"Then said Oscar, 'O Fionn, though I am more nearly akin to thee than to Diarmuid O'Duibhne, I will not suffer thee but to give Diarmuid a drink; and I swear, moreover, that were there any other prince in the world to do Diarmuid O'Duibhne such treachery, there should only escape whichever of us should have the strongest hand; and bring him a drink without delay.' 'I know no well whatever upon this mountain,' said Fionn. 'That is not true,' said Diarmuid, 'for but nine paces from thee is the best well of pure water in the world.'

"After that Fionn went to the well and raised the full of his two hands of the water; but he had not reached more than half way to Diarmuid when he let the water run down through his hands, and he said that he could not bring the water. 'I swear,' said Diarmuid, 'that it was of thine own will thou didst let it from thee.' Fionn went for the water the second time, and he had not come more than the same distance when he let it through his hands, having thought upon Gráinne. Then Diarmuid hove a piteous sigh of anguish when he saw that. 'I swear before my

arms,' said Oscar, 'that if thou bring not the water speedily, O Fionn, there shall not leave the tulach but thou or I.' Fionn returned to the well the third time because of that speech which Oscar made to him, and brought the water to Diarmuid, and as he came up, the life parted from the body of Diarmuid. Then that company of the Fenians of Erin that were present raised three exceeding loud shouts, wailing for Diarmuid O'Duibhne, and Oscar looked fiercely and wrathfully upon Fionn, and what he said was, that it was a greater pity that Diarmuid should be dead than it would have been had Finn perished, and that the Fenians had lost their mainstay in battle by means of him."

When Gráinne saw the Fianna coming into Rathgráinne and Finn leading Diarmuid's hound by the leash, she knew what had happened, and labour came on her, and she bore three dead sons. Great threatening she made then: and she went to her sons that were nearly grown men, and she urged upon them to take up the pursuit of vengeance for their father, and to train themselves in all the arts of valour till they could requite his death on Finn. When word of this came to Finn, he was for mustering the Fianna to cut off Diarmuid's children before they could rebel. But Ossian rose up and what he said was:

"'The guilt of that is no man's but thine, and we will not go to bear out the deed that we have not done, and foul is the treachery that thou didst show towards Diarmuid O'Duibhne though at peace with him. According as thou hast planted the oak, so bend it thyself.'"

Finn seeing that even his own kindred among the Fianna had set their faces against him, despaired of securing his power by violence; but, being a man of craft no less than of war, he turned to a better device.

"He got him to Rathgráinne without the knowledge of the Fenians of Erin, and without bidding them farewell, and greeted Gráinne craftily, cunningly, and with sweet words. Gráinne neither heeded nor hearkened to him, but told him to leave her sight, and straightway assailed him with her keen very sharp-pointed tongue. However Fionn left not plying her with sweet words and gentle loving discourse, until he had brought her to his own will; and he had the desire of his heart and soul of her. After that Fionn and Gráinne went their ways, and no tidings are told of them until they reached the Fenians of Erin; and when they saw Fionn and Gráinne coming towards them in that guise they gave one shout of derision and mockery at her, so that Grainne bowed her head through shame. 'We trow, O Fionn,' quoth Oisin, 'that thou wilt keep Gráinne well from henceforth.'"

And so Gráinne's name comes down with the echo of that mockery hanging about it: and Finn himself, who had to be guarded from the consequence of his own misdeed by a woman's entreaty, is no paladin of romance. The paladins of the story are the younger men, Ossian and Oscar, Diarmuid the foster-son of Angus, and Caoilte always faithful. These men are of the same type as Cuchulain, Fergus, and Conall Cearnach. Yet in truth the interest of the Fenian stories lies chiefly not in the recital of feats of valour: it is a much more complex literary emotion that they evoke. If we fully understood the genesis of the Fenian literature a vast deal that is now hardly even guessed at in Irish history would become luminous.

In the older manuscript collections of poem and story – the Book of Leinster and the Book of the Dun Cow—which go back to the eleventh and twelfth

centuries, the Red Branch cycle dominates. Stories of Finn and his companions are few and unimportant. From the fifteenth century onwards the positions are reversed. Fenian legends are seen controlling the popular imagination; the Fenian sagas ramify and develop; deeds that were originally told of Cuchulain and his comrades are now set down to Ossian or Oscar; and not that only, but the romance literature of Europe becomes woven into the web. Arthur of Britain begins to figure in these tales, and even Charlemagne and Roland. The essential point, however, concerns rather the setting and the purpose of these legends than their personages and incidents. We have no longer a plain bardic tale simply narrated: the story is thrown into the form of dialogue between questioner and answerer, between Pagan and Christian —for the questioner is no less a person than St. Patrick himself.

Legendary history—at this point, perhaps, ceasing to be legendary—tells us that in the reign of Cairbre Liffechair, who succeeded Cormac MacArt in A.D. 266, the Fianna of Ireland grew so mutinous that Cairbre was forced to make war upon them, and finally annihilated their forces in the battle of Gowra (not far south of Tara), where he slew Oscar, but was himself slain. From that date to the coming of Patrick is nearly a hundred and fifty years, but legend assigned to the Fianna a span of life in proportion to their strength, and here is an early form of the Fenian legend, which I take from Mr.

S. H. O'Grady's translation of the *Colloquy of the Ancients*:

"When the battle of Comar, the battle of Gowra, and the battle of Ollarba had been fought, and after that the Fianna for the most part were extinguished, the residue of them in small bands and in companies had dispersed throughout all Ireland, until at the point of time which concerns us there remained not any but two good warriors only of the last of the Fianna: Ossian, son of Finn, and Caoilte, son of Crunnchu, son of Ronan (whose lusty vigour and power of spear-throwing were now dwindled down), and so many fighting men as with themselves made twice nine. These twice nine came out of the flowery-soiled bosky borders of Slievefuad (the Fews mountain in county Armagh), and into the Lughbarta bána, at this present called Lughmadh (anglicé Louth), where, at the falling of the evening clouds, that night they were melancholy, dispirited."

The story tells then how the "remnant of that great and goodly fellowship" decided to part, and how their parting was "a sundering of soul and body." Ossian went to the fairy mound, where dwelt his mother's people, for she was a woman of the *Sidhe*, but Caoilte held on by the Boyne till he came to the rath of Drumderg, where Patrick was:—

"Just then Patrick chanted the Lord's order of the mass, and lauded the Creator and pronounced benediction on the rath in which Finn MacCumall had been—the rath of Drumderg. The clerics saw Caoilte and his band draw near them; and fear fell on them before the tall men with their huge wolfdogs that accompanied them, for they were not people of one epoch or one time with the clergy.

"Then Heaven's distinguished one, that pillar of dignity and angel on earth, Calpurn's son, Patrick, apostle of the Gael, rose and took the aspergillum to sprinkle holy water on the great men;

floating over whom until that day there had been (and were now) a thousand legions of demons. Into the hills and skalps, into the outer borders of the region and of the country, the demons forthwith departed in all directions; after which the enormous men sat down."

So Caoilte was made a Christian, and the colloquy tells how he accompanied Patrick in journeying through Ireland, and at each place told what he knew, and what great feat was done there by the Fianna. And at last, by Patrick's desire, he fetched Ossian also from the fairy mound, and the two old warriors came together to the assembly at Tara, and were telling of the great things that had been. But in this early version (written on vellum by three scribes for the pleasure of MacCarthy Riach, who died in 1505) Caoilte, and not Ossian, was the chief narrator; and the element which gives its peculiar colour to the typical Fenian legend is still wanting. The old men deplore the glory that is gone, and the ebbing of their own strength; but there is no hint of a conflict between their mind and the mind of Patrick, who welcomes and honours them as the depositories of a great tradition which he is eager to save and to record. Very different is the turn which later imagination gave to these dialogues. In this stage, Caoilte disappears altogether as interlocutor, and it is Ossian alone who is brought to Patrick. Imagination shaped also a tale of the manner of his coming, which Mr. Yeats wove into modern verse, calling it "The Wanderings of Oisin." Here is the outline.

There was a great feast of the Fianna held in days before trouble came on them, and as the warriors sat over the ale, into the hall there walked a woman of the fairies, and she offered love and a kingdom to any that would go with her over the sea and under the sea to her own country, Tir-nan-og, the land of the ever-young. Ossian leapt to the challenge, and though comrades tried to hold him back, and prophets warned him, he went with her. But after a while, long or short, of dalliance in her deathless country, he began to long for human company. He would go, he said. She answered him with a question, How long are you here? And he said that he knew only that he was there long enough. Then she told him that in the fairy life centuries of mortal time had gone over him, and that his own country would be changed out of all knowledge, and his comrades dusty and forgotten. But he answered that, right or wrong, he would go, and would come back. So she gave him a fairy horse, warning him not to set foot on the soil of Ireland, or he would never see Tir-nan-og again. It was a changed Ireland he came to; nettles grew where the courts of Finn had been thronged, and there were little stone houses built through the open country, and a clanging of bells from the towers of them. And the people were small, feeble folk: Ossian saw six of them trying to raise a bag of sand, and he stooped from the saddle, with one hand he caught the bag, and he swung it forward disdainfully, showing his contempt for the degenerate race;

but with the strain his saddle girth broke, and, overreached as he was, he fell and touched earth. In a moment his splendour was gone, the pains and infirmities of age seized on him and he stood up, tottering with palsied limbs, bleared eyes, and "spittle on beard never dry." Then they brought the stranger to Patrick, who laboured to convert him.

In these later colloquies Patrick is telling of the strength and severity of God, and of the torment that awaits the unbeliever. And Ossian in answer is telling of the greatness and generosity of the Fenians, and contrasting it with the mean, fettered life of the clerics.

"You tell me your God is strong. If your God and my son Oscar were at wrestle on Knockaulin, and if I saw Oscar down, it is then I would say your God was a strong man, O Patrick!"

That is one famous answer. But a few stanzas may be borrowed from the half grotesque "Lamentation of Oisin after the Fenians," again in Mr. S. H. O'Grady's rendering:

"Alas! in place of the noise of hounds
Sweet and cheerful every morning,
The drowsy noise of bells, a music not sweet to me,
And the doleful sound of a joyless clergy.

"Alas! in place of battles and sore combat,
In which I was wont to stand and rejoice;
The crosier of Patrick being carried,
And his chaunting clerics quarrelling.

"Alas! in place of banquets and of feasts,
Which I used habitually to enjoy;
Long fasting from my meat,
Which the wind would waft beyond the walls.

"Alas! they tell me continually,
That it is not plenty of bread that God loves;
But much prayer and fasting,
Two pursuits which I never have followed.

"Alas! were I as I was
At the time of the terrors of Knockanaur,
If I got not obedience and attendance
I would scatter thy wretched clerics.

"Alas! were I in strength and in vigour
As I was exultingly at the harbour of Fionntragh,
I should not be deafened in the church of the bells,
And I would put a stop to their droning."

But the old man is too far changed from the hero who fought in the great Fenian battles of Knockanaur and Ventry; he can only wail and cry out for food and drink, and the Fenians cannot hear him for all his crying. Patrick soothes him with food, and in the joy of relief after famine he is reconciled to God.—Is this written by a monk deliberately showing a warrior's degradation, or by one who hates clerics, showing the monkish tyranny? It has a bitter flavour in any case, and the bitterness deepens. Ossian still pleads for the pleasures of memory; it "seems long and is a great woe to him 'not to speak of the ways of Fionn of the deeds.' Patrick answers:

"Speak not of Fionn nor of the Fenians,
Or the Son of God will be angry with thee for it:
He would never let thee into his fort,
And he would not send thee the bread of each day."

We are a long way from primitive art in the half-humorous pathos of Ossian's reply :

> "Were I to speak of Fionn and the Fenians
> Between us two, O Patrick the new,
> But only not to speak loud,
> He would never hear us mentioning him."

Bitterest of all is the end of the poem. Ossian feels death approaching, and Patrick causes one of his clerics to strike the old warrior who cries out fiercely at the insult. "Thou rememberest that thou art the mighty Oisin"; says Patrick, sternly : "I fear thy speech has earned God's anger." Ossian dutifully repents and forgives his smiter; all he asks is to be taken into God's fort, "and let Fionn and the Fenians be with me without delay." "That is another sin," answers Patrick. And (in this version) 'Oisin of the Fenians who had been but foolish,' forswears his company among the clouds of death, and prays to God for forgiveness of his loyalty to friendship.

A poem like this may be construed in more ways than one. But this much is literally certain : that the bards who wrote these Ossianic poems, in which the case for freedom against restraint, for spear and hound against bell and crozier, for the men of war against the men of genuflections, is stated with such gusto, wrote in times when they saw Ireland wrecked and ruined by armed strangers, and needing sorely some new Fenian battalions to protect her. And it is fair, I think, to say that just this piquancy of contrast between pagan and Christian is the deter-

mining circumstance which accounts for the replacement of the early and more epic sagas by these Ossianic or Fenian tales. A gulf clearly separated the Red Branch warriors from Irish Christianity in the popular mind; and no less clearly, the popular notion of history made Fionn and his companions real persons in Ireland at a period not very far removed from the downfall of paganism. Links were forged to connect back the historic period which begins at Patrick's coming with what lay nearest in the half-legendary past; and thus the latest of the great heathen fighting-men became a kind of symbol for what Ireland was in the days when she was not the attacked but the attacker. And this symbol was set out against an equally dramatic personification of the ages when Ireland became one hive of monastic learning, the home of the arts of peace, and the easy spoil of every Danish marauder.

This is a far cry from Benbulben. And, in truth, although the Sligo mountain is so closely linked with one of the finest Fenian stories, it has to be said that the cycle belongs to Munster more than to Connaught; and generally that Ossianic legends are of southern Ireland, as the Red Branch tales are of the northern province. Still, there is no better place in Ireland to study legendary history than about Sligo; and if some of my friends can be trusted, those who have the gift of vision can see, even in these later days, strange shapes not of our element walking on Benbulben and Knocknarea.

After this long excursion into legend and the literature of pure legend, I shall make little attempt to gather up the definitely historic associations which cluster about Sligo town. Red Hugh came there in June 1595, when the stir that he had set on foot began to spread even in Connaught, which was so securely held. Here in Sligo, one of the Burkes, serving as a mercenary under George Oge Bingham, suddenly cut off Bingham's head and surrendered the town to O'Donnell, who garrisoned it, since it afforded just the starting-point that he desired for the conquest of Connaught. The English did not leave him long in undisturbed possession. In the autumn of that year, after he had raided and spoiled the country down to Tuam, Sir Richard Bingham, the Governor of Connaught, set out in pursuit. But the Cinel Conaill under Hugh Roe were the hardest people in Ireland to get near, and though the English rode hard from Ballymote, the raiders slipped between them and the sea, past the bridges of Collooney, Ballysadare and Sligo. Bingham followed as far as Sligo, and then halted, encamping in the monastery "as it was the custom of the English to dwell in the holy churches." A party of O'Donnell's scouts mounted on fine fleet horses came back to the north bank, "saw the English up and down through the town," and were themselves seen. Bingham's nephew, Captain Martin, mounted and set off in pursuit, and O'Donnell's scouts returning told how they had only escaped by the fleetness of their

The Beautiful City of Sligo.

horses. Red Hugh scented such an occasion as he delighted in, and having arranged an ambuscade about a mile out of Sligo, sent out another party of horse to the north bank. As soon as they had come there, "Captain Martin jumped on his horse on seeing them as quick as a hound would go in pursuit of its favourite game" (says Lugaidh O'Clery, father of one of the Four Masters, in his contemporary Life of Hugh Roe). Martin's troopers followed, and O'Donnell's men retreated, "proceeding at first to hold quietly the bridlebits in the mouth of the swift, galloping horses," in order to decoy the pursuers on. But very soon it was necessary for them "to spur and whip the horses at once and together," so hot was the pursuit, and one man, Phelim Reagh Mac Devitt, was ill-mounted, and finding himself in danger, was obliged to neglect his orders and turn on Captain Martin, who led the chase.

"The aforesaid Phelim had a sharp piercing spear to shoot when he wished. He put his finger to the string, and he drew the javelin boldly, and the shot of the dart struck Captain Martin with such force that it passed through the border of the foreign armour at the hollow of the armpit, and it pierced his heart in his breast, as his misdeeds deserved, for he who was wounded there was a merciless rogue, and his hatred of the Irish was very great."

This checked pursuit and the ambush failed—rousing O'Donnell's fury, which only subsided when a party of the scouts "came into the presence of their prince, though it was very hard for them on account of his great anger," and testified on

behalf of Mac Devitt. Bingham on his part was no less angry:

"He ordered his army to go to the monastery and pull down and destroy the roodscreen and the cells of the servants of God, and to bring him enough of the firmly-bound, well-jointed boards, and of the strong smooth-hewn beams to make a machine for pulling down walls."

The engines thus constructed were advanced to the Castle, and assault was given, but O'Donnell's garrison drove them off and Bingham retired in discomfiture to Roscommon. O'Donnell did not risk another siege. He pulled down the castle and "did not leave a stone of it on a stone," and did the same by thirteen more castles of Connaught. Thus when Sligo figures again in the record of his incessant marchings, it is only as a stage on his usual route from Donegal into Connaught—across Saimer (the Erne), and Duff and Drowes and Sligeach.

Ballymote, some ten miles south of Sligo, near Gráinne's portion, Keshcorran, became in reality O'Donnell's headquarters after he captured it: and from here in the north of Connaught he waged war with unbroken success (sharply punishing the O'Briens of Thomond for their alliance with England) until Docwra, landing at Derry from the sea, made an assault in his rear, and the traitor Niall Garbh, Hugh's near kinsman, struck at the very home of Cinel Conaill, Donegal itself.

In the Williamite wars Sligo had a chequered

history. The surrounding country, being rich, was thickly settled with Protestant gentry, and at the first rumour of fighting these organised themselves, seized the town and repaired the forts. But presently orders from the traitor Lundy reached Lord Kingston who commanded in Sligo, bidding him evacuate the town and march to join the other forces in Derry. Kingston marched out and the town was at once occupied by the Irish. The Sligo contingent added itself to the Protestant force of Enniskilleners so brilliantly commanded by Lloyd, and took part in the famous victory of Newtown Butler. Sarsfield, who commanded for James in the West with such raw levies as he could muster, fell back from his post at Ballyshannon on Sligo, the most important town in North Connaught. But he had under him a demoralised and nerveless force, who, at the mere rumour of the Enniskilleners' approach, fled in tumult, leaving their ordnance and stores to the enemy. Thus Sligo was again King William's before Schomberg landed in Ireland.

Yet in the meantime Sarsfield was heartening a beaten side and raised altogether 2,000 horse in Connaught. The Enniskilleners, confident from repeated triumphs, laid a plan to cross the Shannon at Jamestown, join a detachment of Lloyd's garrison from Sligo, and, by a sudden movement, to capture Galway. Sarsfield learnt the plan, and with his Connaught levies and five regiments borrowed from the army which lay with James about Dundalk

observing Schomberg, he marched to the attack. About three miles outside Sligo a battle was fought in which Sarsfield, according to a letter in the State Papers (dated November 30th, 1689), killed 800 foot and 125 horse. The town was defended against him for four days by Saint Sauvent, a Huguenot refugee, who, for lack of provisions, surrendered on good terms. Sligo, thus recaptured after two months, was held now steadily for King James—the key to all the country west of the Shannon. It is one of the two signal successes which crowned Sarsfield's glorious but unlucky name.

When Sarsfield departed to join the main army he left the charge of Sligo to a very singular old veteran. Sir Teigue O'Regan had held Charlemont in Tyrone very desperately against Schomberg and only marched out (with all the honours of war) when his men were chewing raw hide. He himself, hunchbacked, slovenly, ill-booted, ill-cravated, rode out on an old spavined charger, whose kicking and squealing interrupted the amenities between himself and Schomberg. In Sligo he was ready to surrender after the passage of the Shannon was forced at Athlone ; but the day of Aughrim followed and, cut off in the north of Connaught without means of communicating with those from whom he held his command, Sir Teigue determined to fight to the last. Nevertheless, forces were too many for him, and at last this tough old veteran—of whom Colonel Wood-Martin, the historian of Sligo, is a warm panegyrist—submitted to

Mitchelburne after a correspondence honourable to both sides.

The spirit of the men who joined the Enniskilleners has survived. Sligo is still a strong centre of Protestantism in the West, and the Protestant gentry have there maintained themselves much better than in the rest of Connaught. The hard-drinking, hard riding, gambling squire and squireen have been less common here, and, signs by, the families of Cromwellian plantation are there still, many of them, in prosperity. Altogether Sligo is more like Ulster than Connaught, and its ties are with the northern province. Yet the religious bigotry which disgraces Ulster is not felt here: and it is pleasant to set down for a last impression that at Collooney a few miles out of the town a couple of progressive Protestant landlords have created one of the most active groups of co-operative industries to be found in all Ireland.

Skerry.

CHAPTER VI

SLEMISH AND ST. PATRICK

As you go eastward out of the brisk, prosperous little town of Ballymena, along the road which leads to Glenarm and the sea—Sruth na Maoile, the narrow sea between Antrim glens and the glens of Scotland—two landmarks characterise the country. The valley of the Braid runs east and west between lines of hill, steep but not rocky ; and the eye, following their unbroken slopes and curves, is led on rather than arrested. But full in front of you, as you travel the road by the foot of the northern barrier, rises a low summit, insignificant enough in size, yet noted for a certain sharpness of contour which is strongly emphasised by a gable of craggy ruin. This peak of rock and masonry is Skerry. Over against it, on the southern wall of the valley, a huge mass of dark

stone, barely covered with vegetation, lies transversely across the undulating ridge, dominating the whole scene, as a higher mountain of more regular outline might fail to do. The high-raised bluff is Slemish ; and it tells a story of ages before human habitation ; for it shows to any understanding mind the very neck of a volcano, where the outpouring of basaltic slag, solidifying, raised on the crust of earth this monstrous dump, as it were, of débris. Thus seen, a puzzle will be made clear ; for, although you travel towards a not-distant sea, the Braid river flows to meet you, bound inland for the great central basin of Lough Neagh. At the seaward end of this valley is no pass or waterway ; the ridge which closes your view is solid and continuous, a barrier heaved up in the great convulsion when lava spouted from Slemish ; and, in later ages of the world, this dividing of the watersheds made a division of the kingdoms. To the seaward was Dalriada, the country of the glens ; to the landward, stretching away south till it also reached the sea towards Belfast and Strangford, was Dalaradia. And about the year 420 of our era, the chief of northern Dalaradia was one Miliuc, or Milcho, whose dún lay in the valley under Slemish—perhaps entrenched upon the craggy top of Skerry itself. To that dún raiders of his own, or of some other barbaric chieftain, brought a captive from civilised Roman Britain, snatched out of the villa where his father, Calpurnius the deacon, had rank and title and duties as a *decurio* or knight in the all-embracing organisa-

tion which the world then knew as Rome. Succat was the captive's name; but later he was called Patricius, and for the sake of Patrick the valley of the Braid deserves a pilgrimage as well as any spot in our island.

Of all national saints there is none, I think, who retains so vivid an existence in memory as the patron saint of Ireland—none whose name carries with it so much of reality, or means so much to his own people. St. George and St. Andrew are mere rhetorical figures, and even in that use seldom brought forward, perhaps, it will be said, because England and Scotland are Protestant countries. But to Protestants in Ireland St. Patrick is only less real than King William; and they are constantly instructed to revere him as founder of a national Church which had nothing to do with the Pope of Rome. Yet, after all, these retrospective polemics have never touched the national imagination. St. Patrick more than any figure stands for what is common between Irishman and Irishman beyond party and creed. More than Niall of the Nine Hostages, more even than Brian of the Tribute, he is the common father of us all, although a foreigner and a Roman. The stoutest champion, baptised in Boyne water, who curses the Pope and swears by the tough Dutchman of secular canonisation ("glorious, pious, and immortal"), will probably resent no less than his Catholic neighbour any attempt to turn Patrick into a pious invention, a mere mythical personage. Yet the attempt has been made. But now that a great

scholar, bred and trained in Ireland, but standing aloof from all creeds and parties, has written his Life of Patrick, it is pleasant and comforting to know that the most scientific criticism warrants us in regarding Patrick as a historic figure whose achievement was no less momentous and no less personal than it has been represented by tradition.

The special value of Professor Bury's study is that it shows us in a new aspect the nature of that transformation which the saint inaugurated, and, in great measure, accomplished—placing it in relation to other vast movements and rearrangements of the European destiny. After reading him, we realise that Patrick came in days when Rome was still, in theory at least, one universal commonwealth, embracing the whole civilised world. He came, a Roman, to preach the religion of Rome ; and the chiefs of Ireland, to whom he addressed himself, could no more separate the spiritual aspect of his teaching from its association with the secular majesty of the Empire than can some potentate in Africa to-day forget that the religion of the meek missionary who labours for his conversion is the religion accepted by those who command the business of the world.

In the opening of the fifth century Rome had ceased to be a dread to the outer gentiles who were tearing already at the flanks of Empire—Irish wolves among them as fierce as any ; Patrick had felt their teeth in his flesh, he was part of their quarry. Yet, even while they plundered, they could not but per-

ceive their own deficiency ; and when they gave welcome and encouragement to the missionary, they thought certainly of more than things spiritual ; they opened the gates for an influence that taught how to order, to settle, to govern, *pacisque imponere morem.* Laoghaire, the High King (as Professor Bury points out, in amplifying the apt quotation which I have borrowed from him), never became a Christian, but he gave Patrick liberty and privileges ; and in his reign Irish law was codified and embodied in the Senchus Mór. Thus a great step was taken from that Homeric stage of society which we find depicted in the legends and annals of pre-Christian Ireland, towards the later development in which the country became the centre and refuge for all learned and peaceable pursuits.

This is the aspect of Patrick's work on which stress is laid by the editor of Gibbon. But the historian is too good a biographer to suggest that this aspect was present to Patrick's mind. No apostle was ever more simple, more single-purposed, more of a Gospel Christian, than the writer of the *Confession* ; and we have good right to rejoice that criticism can accept absolutely the genuineness of this document, as well as of the Epistle to Coroticus. For if these things are genuine, we have far more than ascertained knowledge concerning the work of a saint who established Christianity in this island : we have the man himself. There could not be a fuller revelation of personality than is given by the *Confession*, an autobiography

most vivid, most real, convincing in its very clumsiness. Here, in the evening of life, the saint set down a narrative of his spiritual career ; and if one thing is plainer than another, it is that he wrote in no atmosphere of adulation, but as one justifying himself, roughly, confusedly, and at times even angrily. A voice is speaking to us through fourteen centuries, but as human, as charged and coloured with personality, as any accent of to-day, pathetic even by its rusticity, its imperfect mastery of the Roman tongue. Yet Patrick's Latin is no dead or alien language ; it is vernacular, full of sap and life, the utterance of a rough, half-educated man, using a language which he had employed constantly in the commerce of life and thought, but always rustically, without grace or grammar. Even in a translation, though regularised, it keeps its character ; and if Irish men and women were rationally educated, this document would not be left to the study of scholars, but would be familiar to us all. It brings whoever can read it into living contact with the saint ; it shows him clear, stripped of that atmosphere of marvels which succeeding generations were only too quick to weave around him. Even the earliest of the Lives, those which Muirchu and Tirechan wrote perhaps less than two hundred years after his death, obscure him strangely to our view. But the *Confession*, though it should be the centre of all that is learnt and taught concerning Patrick, is by no means sufficing. Purely a narrative of his spiritual career, it fills in few historic

details; and above all, it leaves hungry that desire, so characteristic of the Irish, for fixing events to their setting. Only two names of places are given in it; and of these, one—that of his home in Britain—cannot be identified with certainty, while the other occasions a controversy of another kind, and has been made the ground for attacking a most venerable tradition. If Professor Bury is right, we have no call to go on pilgrimage to the valley of the Braid.

Yet, probably, the first thing which anyone learns about St. Patrick is that he was a slave, herding on the hill-slopes of Slemish. Now for part of this we have his own authority, and also for the more significant fact that the district where he herded beasts under the cold sky was the place of his spiritual enlightenment, the school of his inner man. Here is a translation of the passages which tell the story. I take it from the other Life of the Saint, by Archbishop Healy, which appeared, by an odd coincidence, almost simultaneously with Professor Bury's, to offer a contrast and a complement.

"I, Patrick, a sinner, am the most rustic and the meanest of all the faithful, and contemptible in the esteem of very many. I had for father Calpurnius, a deacon, a son of the presbyter Potitus, who belonged to the town of Bannaventa in Britain. For he had a villa near it where I was made captive. I was then barely sixteen years old. I knew not the true God; and I was led to Ireland in captivity with many thousand persons, according to our deserts, for we turned away from God and kept not His commandments, and were not obedient to our priests who used to admonish us about our salvation. And the Lord brought upon us the indignation of his wrath, and scattered us amongst many nations, even to the ends of

Slemish Mountain.

the utmost part of the earth, where now my littleness is beheld among strangers. And there the Lord opened the understanding of my unbelief, so that at length I might recall to mind my sins, and turn with all my heart to the Lord my God, who regarded my humility and took pity on my youth and ignorance, and kept watch over me before I knew Him, and before I had discretion or could distinguish between good and evil, and protected me and consoled me as a father his son."

Then the narrative passes into praise and adoration, breaking off again to explain its writer's intention—

"Yet, though in many things I am imperfect, I wish my brethren and kinsfolk to know what manner of man I am, so that they may be able to perceive the purpose of my soul."

A Scriptural justification for such 'confession' passes into an apology. Men may blame me, Patrick says, for writing "with my want of knowledge and slower tongue" in a speech and style "changed into the tongue of the stranger,"—that is, in the Latin of one who had come to think in Irish. "Yet," the saint cries, passing into a superb eloquence—

"It is written 'The stammering tongues shall quickly learn to speak peace'; how much rather should we covet to do this, who are ourselves the epistle of Christ for salvation unto the ends of the earth?"

So, by long windings, in which a very passion of prophecy mingles strangely with defiance of those "lordly rhetoricians," who, by their training, "have drunk in both laws and sacred letters in equal perfection," and have "from infancy never changed their. language," he returns again to his narrative :—

"Now, after I came to Ireland, daily I herded flocks; and often during the day I prayed: love of God and His fear increased more and more, and faith grew, and the spirit was stirred up, so that in a single day I said as many as a hundred prayers, and in the night about as many, and that I remained even in the woods and on the mountain. Before the dawn I used to be aroused to prayer in snow, in frost, in rain, and I felt no hardship; nor was there any slackness in me, such as now I perceive, because then the spirit was fervent within me. And then, on a certain night, I heard in my sleep a voice saying: 'Thou fastest well; thou art soon to go to thy fatherland.' And again, after a little time I heard the Divine voice saying to me: 'Lo, thy ship is ready.' And it was not near by, but distant perchance two hundred miles. And I had never been there, nor had I any acquaintance among the persons there. And thereafter I betook myself to flight, and left the man with whom I had been six years: and I came in the virtue of God who directed my path for good; and I had no alarm till I came to that ship."

In all this, it will be seen, there is not a word of Slemish. But in the Lives, from Muirchu downward, we are told, without question or argument, that Patrick herded flocks on a mountain called "Mis" (Sliabh Mis), and that his master was Miliuc, king of northern Dalaradia. This unanimous voice of tradition has never before been questioned by anyone who accepted the general historical character of the story; and it is disconcerting to find Professor Bury proposing to rob the Braid Valley of its chief glory, and on the strength of one single ambiguous word.

The matter is worth explaining, for a great deal hangs by it, no less than the whole value of unwritten Irish tradition. Nobody disparages the written testi-

mony of a contemporary ; and for the events of St. Patrick's life, there is no appeal against St. Patrick himself. Archbishop Healy, for instance—a scholar trained in the school which accepts the miraculous—is no less clear than Professor Bury that the *Confession* is a touchstone by which to test tradition. There are miracles related of Patrick's boyhood ; but Patrick himself tells us that before his capture he was in spiritual darkness.

"I did not believe in the living God, nor had I from my infancy ; but I remained in death and unbelief until I was greatly chastened and humbled in truth ' y hunger and nakedness, and that, too, daily."

And therefore, on the strength of this, the Archbishop—not brusquely but firmly—brushes aside the legends of miracle wrought by this as yet very unmiraculous boy. But that is a very different thing from dismissing a whole body of tradition because it conflicts with the interpretation of a single passage.

This passage occurs after the *Confession* has told how Patrick and his companions on the voyage from Ireland were miraculously preserved. We find the saint (after several intervening years of which he tells us nothing, though the Lives fill up the gap) back in Britain with his parents, who "earnestly besought" him that, "after so many tribulations" he should never go away from them. And indeed it seems he was loth to go, but a call came.

"Now there it was I saw, in a vision of the night, a man coming as if from Ireland, whose name was Victoricus, with

numberless letters. And he gave one of them to me; and I read the beginning of the letter, purporting to be 'The voice of the Irish'; and whilst I was reading out the beginning of the letter, I thought that at that moment I heard the voices of those who dwelt beside the wood of Focluth which is by the western sea; and thus they cried, as if with one mouth, 'We beseech thee, holy youth, to come *and walk once more amongst us*.'

"And I was greatly touched in heart and could read no more, and so I awoke. Thanks be to God that after very many years the Lord granted to them according to their earnest cry."

Now, there is no doubt whatever about the wood of Focluth. It was in Tirawley near Killala, and the name survives, though doubtless in restricted significance. It is a far cry from Slemish to this corner of northern Connaught, and yet the passage, as Archbishop Healy (like Professor Bury) translates it, seems to imply that Patrick had been there before his escape. Archbishop Healy, indeed, conjectures that Killala was the spot where he took ship; and it is about the right distance—two hundred miles from Slemish. A western line of flight was unlikely, and no less unlikely is it that a vessel in the fifth century would be sailing from Connaught to Britain. But if I had to choose, I would far rather accept Dr. Healy's interpretation than dismiss with Professor Bury the whole story of Slemish, and assert that north Mayo was the scene of Patrick's captivity.

A much simpler solution is found if we believe that when St. Patrick wrote, *ut venias et adhuc ambulas*, he attached no particular meaning to the word *adhuc*, on

which Professor Bury bases his whole destructive theory. St. Patrick, good man, was prone to take liberties with the language (as his *ambulas* shows); and he strewed his style (after the fashion of rustic talkers and writers) with particles and conjunctions of which no very literal interpretation can be given, and should translate, 'come, yea and sojourn among us.' This may be a bold method of dismissing the difficulty. But at least we all of us in Ulster are entitled, before an honour is transferred to Connaught, to ask, Why did the chroniclers falsify facts in this matter? How did it come to pass that, two hundred years after the death of the greatest among Irish saints, men asserted that his captive years were spent in Dalaradia, when the truth should have put them in Tirawley? If I know my country, the scholars of Tirawley would have raised an outcry against this injustice, whose echoes would come down the centuries as clearly as those of the quarrel between Columba and the rival scribe over a question of copyright.

Should it be asked, Why then was the "voice of Ireland" specially associated with the wood of Focluth? an answer is forthcoming. That remote region of the west may, in those days of uncertain geography, have been taken actually for the remotest of all. And the *Confession* makes it clear that Patrick conceived of himself on his apostolic mission as issuing from the Roman pale and from familiar civilisation, to preach and evangelise the uttermost Hesperides, *ultimum terræ*, the limit of the world

—in his own words, *ubi nemo ultra erat*, "where beyond there was no man."

It is not a light matter, nor one merely of sentimental importance,—though the thought of Patrick is so closely intertwined with this definite locality, these hill-slopes of Slemish, that if we attempted to root up those associations and fix them elsewhere, the story would inevitably lose much of its sentimental power. In the traditional accounts truth has admittedly been contaminated with much of mere fancy, and we should feel the solid basis of fact crumbling if, in a detail itself wholly credible, the chroniclers were proved to have misled us wantonly. But more than this is at stake. In our efforts to recreate the story of past ages in Ireland, positive historical record must be supplemented largely by oral tradition, and especially by what of it is preserved in place-names; and, taking this as a test case, we should be obliged to discredit the old annalists even when their story was supported by this collateral evidence to be gathered on the spot.

Let us consider, as pilgrims to the valley of the Braid, what light our own investigation can throw on this matter—how far the testimony of our senses will support the chroniclers.

The worst of it is that the valley of the Braid is not quite as the rest of Ireland. In many regions and places tradition survives with such over-mastering force and so backed by relics of the past as to carry conviction to any intelligent mind. But here in

county Antrim the work of extirpation and dispossession was so thoroughly carried out under Elizabeth, under Cromwell, and again even under George III. in 1796—when Catholic cabins were served with the notices directing their occupants to "hell or Connaught"—that few descendants of the original Irish are left on the soil. About Ballymena, I am told, until quite recently a man of the settlers would correct whoever called him Irish. He was Scotch and so styled himself—Scotch in blood and in sympathy (an explicit declaration which has much to commend it). It is not surprising, then, that tradition of the saint and his work among the Irish survives but feebly on the spot. Yet, even so, it survives.

The Lives tell us, although the *Confession* does not, how Patrick on his missionary expedition landed first at some port in south-east Ireland—probably Wicklow—but put to sea again, coasting up past Bray Head and Howth, till he touched at Inish Patrick (the little island off Skerries). There he and his men victualled and watered, and proceeded on again past the estuaries of Leinster, till the galley rounded Slieve Donard, and stood in through the narrows of Strangford Lough. At Saul, which still keeps its name, he met Dichu, the chief who became his first convert; and close by he founded Downpatrick, first of his churches, and last of his abodes on earth. Archbishop Healy's Catholic piety rejoices to declare that in this corner of Protestant Ulster—once Magh Innis, now the barony of Lecale—Catholicism has

never lost its hold ; the stranger has never rooted out the descendants of the first whom Patrick evangelised. Here, at all events, the saint sojourned for a time—perhaps for the whole winter of 432–3. But at last he set out to march due north, aiming his steps for Slemish and his old master's home. A straight course would bring him round the end of Belfast Lough and across the ford near where the city stands ; and thence from the top of Cave Hill, above Belfast, the eye can trace his natural route to where tradition, at least, marks his arrival on the high ridge, with the whole valley of the Braid spread under his eyes.

To reach this point as Patrick reached it, you must go out from Ballymena by the way leading south-east (to Larne) for about six miles ; then turn sharp to the left, up a road over the hill, so steep and so direct that it probably follows a course trodden from immemorial ages. Within a mile or so you begin to see over the back of the ridge which has separated you from the Braid valley ; to your right suddenly the bluff of Slemish rises abruptly from the all but level moor, blocking all view of the sea. But to your left, some ten or twelve miles distant, is the broad, shining face of Lough Neagh ; and, by the time you reach a schoolhouse by the wayside, every nook in the valley below and before you is visible to good sight. The schoolhouse is more than a mere landmark, for its name, the National School of Cross, preserves the evidence we are in search of. A stile

leading into the field to the left brings you on to a faintly traceable track across the grass—once, beyond doubt, a pilgrims' way—and you will reach a starved and stunted plantation of trees, fenced with a stone wall, which crowns the Hill of Cross. Here once stood a commemorative cross, at which, says Muirchu, the prayers of the faithful earn the most fortunate result. The cross is gone, no trace remains of it, but the name perpetuates a memory of the belief that it once stood where Patrick paused and trembled to witness his portentous triumph.

For, according to the story, Miliuc was not only ruler but Druid and magician ; and the coming of Patrick was foreknown to him. Even without Druid magic, news might well have travelled the forty miles from Slieve Donard to Slemish, telling how the fugitive slave had returned with a retinue, bringing a strange message ; and how Dichu, the ruler of Magh Innis, had submitted to his teaching, and given a house for the new worship : and perhaps a fear came over Miliuc that the power which had prevailed in Magh Innis would prevail also in Dalaradia, and he himself become the subject of his bond slave. At all events the story tells how he entered into his house, and, shutting himself up with all his treasures, fired the wooden building ; and as Patrick crested the hill, and looked out once more over the rocky pasturage where he had driven his master's herds, the flames of Miliuc's dún were the first thing he beheld.

"For the space of two hours or three, he stood in a trance uttering no word, but sighing, groaning, and weeping; and at last finding utterance, 'I know not, God knows,' he said, 'whether the man, this king who gave himself to the fire lest he should believe at the end of his life, and be the servant of Eternal God, I know not, God knows, no son of his shall sit as king on the seat of kingdom from generation to generation, and his seed shall be slaves to everlasting.

"Then, praying and fortifying himself with the sign of the cross, he turned back to the place whence he had come, following the same trail."

So Muirchu tells the story. To-day no living memory speaks of pilgrimages there, such as his words imply. Nor is Miliuc's dún identified. Raths are plenty in the neighbourhood; and one stands conspicuous enough on the left-hand side of the road to Skerry, which may date from a day as old as Patrick's. But tradition assigns no name to it; and one would incline to guess that Skerry itself, so craggy, yet so sheltered, and so visible from the Hill of Cross, might be the spot. Yet, if so, the slave's triumph over his master was complete indeed; the very memory of any former uses is blotted out, and tradition keeps only the fame of the saint, less piously perhaps than before, for the "pattern" or annual celebration in his honour has long been discontinued; but still pilgrims—at least of curiosity—are constant to the spot where Patrick received the angel's visit and built a church in commemoration.

While you are going to Skerry from Ballymena the small peak, crowned by the craggy ruin, grows always distincter as you pass along a road lined with

prosperous cottages, every one trim with flowers, and many, when I saw them, wreathed with that most beautiful and capricious of all climbing plants, the scarlet tropæolum, which in the inclement north often grows a very weed. About five miles out, any wayside inquiry will guide you where a short field-path leads to Tobar na Súil, "the well of the eyes"—once a place of pilgrimage, but now notable noway except for the beauty and translucency of its water, springing over iridescent sand, a sight good for sore eyes, though miracles of healing be no longer wrought there. Beyond it a hilly road turns towards Skerry, maintained chiefly for the convenience of funerals; but it is better to hold on and turn in by a cottage where a path goes straight up, rising steeply on the very brow through some natural scrub of sloe, hazel, wild-rose, and hawthorn—lineal descendants doubtless of the brakes among which Patrick wandered as a herd. From here the place shows as a crag; the basalt rock rises bare and sheer above you, though to no great height. On top is the ruined church of masonry, not very antique, probably the third or fourth edifice that has stood there. Its east end is strongly vaulted in with a low grass-covered roof that shelters the burying place of the O'Neill family: and near by, outside the enclosing wall, is a flag of stone on which the rough semblance of a footprint marks where the angel stood when he communed with Patrick. A hundred similar inventions could be cited in different parts

of Ireland; down here in the valley of the Braid, Ballyleckpatrick, 'the townland of Patrick's flagstone,' probably keeps an echo of some other crude fancy.

But in the associations of Skerry reality is stronger than fable. As we look out from the little burying-ground we see indeed a changed country: lands chequered with tillage, criss-crossed with well-kept fences, while beyond them and the gleaming stretches of the Braid rises the blue smoke of Ballymena's factories. Yet there is little doubt that we look out over a country, changed indeed but not beyond recognition, which for six years was daily familiar to a great apostle; little doubt that he also saw Lough Neagh lose its outline in the sun mist, and the blue line of Derry hills close the horizon beyond the plain country where the Bann flows northward. All this doubtless he saw when he saw only with the eye of the body and looked out angrily on the barbarous hills that imprisoned a free-born citizen of Rome. Later, all this perhaps grew even endeared to him as the place of his new birth, where the transformation that takes place in certain lives wrought itself in him, and he began to behold a new heaven and a new earth—a new purpose in himself and in the world.

The history of Slemish and its surroundings, apart from St. Patrick, is not momentous; yet here also, as in all places, scrutiny would unearth some trace of each succeeding epoch in the history of Ireland. Primitive man strewed this region with more than

a common share of stone axes, arrow-heads, and the like ; for Tibullia, a mountain in the glens not far off, afforded a limitless supply of one particular basaltic formation that lent itself specially to these uses ; and I slept in Ballymena under the same roof with, perhaps, the greatest private collection of stone implements in Great Britain.

Raths are to be seen both from the Glenarm road and the Larne road ; and a finer one is in the grounds of Gallgorm Castle, a mile out of the town near the Maine Water. About it are some traces of building —not a common feature ; and a strong tradition reports that a McQuillan of the Route (the modern name for Dalriada), being expelled by the Mac-Donnells from his home in the Glens, settled himself here and added fortification of masonry to the old earthwork. There is no doubt that McQuillan had dealings with the first builders of Gallgorm, which is a fine example of the plantation castles with its bawns and its flanking towers. Sir Faithful Fortescue built it under Elizabeth, and McQuillan was able to show that the land on which it was built had been granted twice over, and granted first to him. His rights were soon bought out, and he and his melted off that country like snow in spring. Not so the occupants of Gallgorm. The castle has changed hands many times, but it has always been a stronghold of the strangers—of that conquest so unlike St. Patrick's. Patrick brought to Ireland the culture of Rome but not her yoke ; the Fortescues and other

heroes of the Elizabethan conquest brought the rule of England but not her freedom. They were, in theory at least, the avowed missionaries of a religion ; their mission was to root out falsehood and idolatry, to establish the worship of true virtue and Gloriana—see Edmund Spenser *passim*. Yet, although they have maintained their conquest, their religion has gained few adherents—from no lack of devotion or ability in its ministers. Learned Ussher, saintly Berkeley, and all the other great Protestant divines have been hampered, not helped, by the armed might of England at their backs. Protestantism in Ireland has never had a chance to be considered on its merits as a religion ; it was too closely identified with a policy of confiscation. Yet the purely alien domination, of which Gallgorm was one of the fortresses, has been durable ; it has lasted three hundred years, it may last another fifty. And when it is done with, perhaps the influence of St. Patrick which stands in Ireland, I think, neither for Protestantism nor Catholicism, but for Christianity, may renew the triumphs of these earlier centuries when Ireland had the envy and not the compassion of Europe.

Thoughts of this kind are bound to force themselves in Ballymena, for there the rivalry of religions is obtrusive. Belfast itself is not more aggressive, and the Orange drum beats constantly. Historically, the town suggests ugly memories : a regiment of Catholics who surrendered there in 1641 was cut down after quarter given—not without scandal to the officer of

Sir John Clotworthy's regiment, who chronicles the occurrence: a handful of loyalists who held the court-house in 1798 were massacred by the mob, who finally overpowdered their resistance. Yet there is a more profitable aspect of history to dwell on here. The valley of the Braid, thoroughly cultivated, is good land employing plenty of labour; it is held by small but prosperous farmers, many of whom still pay rent to a landlord, though some are owners by now, clearing off annually their purchase by instalments to the State. But in all these farms there is a tradition of tenancy on reasonable terms. The tenant's right to a saleable interest in the farm which he works has dated here from the eighteenth century or earlier; and the result stands out agreeably in well-tilled fields and trim cottages. The rest of Ireland has a good deal to learn from these Ulstermen, and much of it is typified by the flowers about the houses. Ballymena itself, with its strong industrial life, its woollen mills growing up to meet a shrinkage in the linen trade, offers other aspects of the same lesson which would take the student far enough from St. Patrick, yet which can only be studied with profit to Ireland by one who remembers the common bond between all Irishmen so well symbolised in the name of their common saint.

And, as it chances, the only other historic association beside that of Patrick's presence which links itself with Slemish recalls Protestant Irishmen who risked and sacrificed all for the general liberation of

their country at a time when they themselves were still a privileged class. The Society of United Irishmen originated in the north, and in all the rebellion of '98, not many fiercer engagements were fought than the battle of Antrim. After the defeat of the insurgents a body of them fell back on Slemish, and for several days camped there unmolested. A well is shown which one of their leaders discovered by accident. He enlarged the opening with his sword, and to this day it keeps his name, "M'Cracken's Well." And it is not only nationalists in the north who still hold in reverence the memory of that handsome and spirited young rebel—Henry Joy M'Cracken. Perhaps he may have his statue yet, in Belfast, or Ballymena, or Antrim. To-day the well on Slemish is his only monument—and no bad one either.

CHAPTER VII

TARA. THE HIGH KING'S COURT.

THERE is no lack of genuine poets among the later instructed generation, acquainted with the truly Celtic note ; but none of them, writing about Ireland, can win anything like the audience which listened to Thomas Moore. And, at least from one point of view, that is a pity ; for the tourist goes to Tara with his head full of "Tara's walls" and "Tara's halls," and to a certainty incurs disappointment.

There is no place in Ireland where the existence of great historic associations is so generally recognised (thanks to Moore) as at Tara ; there is no place so disappointing to those who come to it without some degree of knowledge—because, I think, the literature which moulded their preconceived ideas of the place consisted of sentiment not based on knowledge. This is curious enough, for Moore was essentially a bookish man, and if he could have read about Tara, and all that Tara stood for, he would have done so. But that was impossible, from the standpoint of his age ; since in the days when Moore was writing the

earlier *Melodies* no one regarded it as possible that Irish annals could throw any light on the past of Ireland.

During Moore's lifetime that point of view changed considerably; but, living in England, he was remote from the influence of Irish study, and his attitude is, I think, fairly typified by a story which I heard the other day from an old Gaelic scholar who is (what all Gaelic scholars are not) enthusiastic for the fame of Thomas Moore. Moore, he said, in one of his last visits to Ireland (say in 1841), met O'Curry, and saw him at work on some old manuscripts for his *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*. "How old are these records?" asked Moore: O'Curry said, "Perhaps a thousand years old, perhaps more." "And you can read them?" said Moore; O'Curry answered, of course, that he could. Moore asked no more questions, but he was silent for a considerable time, pacing up and down the room till at last he broke out, O'Curry said (my friend had the story direct), with extraordinary vehemence into an exclamation: "Good God! what a fool I was to undertake to write the history of Ireland!"

Nowadays all the material which Moore's exclamation recognised as essential to the understanding of Ireland's past is more or less readily available. My object in this chapter is to put together, from Irish sources, some account of the sort of civilisation which Patrick found in existence, when, after his winter of waiting in Magh Innis, and his brief

excursion to Slemish, he set out in good earnest on his missionary enterprise, addressing himself to the very seat of power, in a society which was organised, not from the bottom upwards, as is the modern democratic plan, but from the top, that is from the king downwards, through the clans, and septs, and families. All our accounts of Tara were written in Christian times, but they all agree that the days of Tara's chief glory was under pagan rulers, and that it had already passed its zenith when Patrick first preached there.

More than this, the accounts were written in an Ireland where the Milesians predominated, and Tara was certainly the first centre of Milesian power. Thus a Milesian bias must be allowed for in the traditions which represent the place as an immemorial seat of sovereignty. But whether the Lia Fáil was brought there by the Firbolgs, by the Tuatha de Danann, or by the Milesians—and legend variously ascribes its erection to each of these races ; whether there is any clear historical fact behind these legends of successive invasions or no ; there is no question that Tara was the chief centre of power in Ireland from a period beyond the limit of ascertained history down to the sixth century of our era.

Before one attempts any historical comment a rough description must be given of what is actually to be seen. Readers who want a map will find one in Mr. Cooke's indispensable " Murray."

Tara, then, is about twenty-four miles from Dublin,

and rail brings you to within four English miles of it at Kilmessan. (It is not much further distant from Navan, on the other side.) Driving from Kilmessan, you soon come into a country of low hills, the southern confine of the Boyne valley, and you approach Tara itself without any sense of nearing a marked eminence. In the little village (which has been a village for many hundreds of years) is a meeting place of roads; but the best landmark is the church and churchyard. Roughly speaking, the top of the hill consists of two long fields, permanent pasture like nearly all that country. Grazing land at Tara fetches about five pounds the Irish acre; the old kings did not pick the worst of Ireland for their demesne. These two fields run east and west, with a fall each way, so that the highest point is about the bank which divides them—part of which is the old bank of Rath na Riogh, the Rath of the Kings. Along these two fields is a slope to the northward, mainly covered with a plantation, and in that plantation are two earthworks. Along the south side, which slopes less sharply, is another lea-field, where bullocks drink of the well Nemnach; and out of a corner of this field at the east the churchyard is cut.

Thus, entering by the gate at the east end near the village, you have the churchyard to your left, and to your right is the ground plan of the banqueting hall. Straight before you, as you advance, is the demolished Rath na Seanaidh. Beyond that is the dividing

ditch, which you cross by a stile, near the churchyard wall : and you are at once among a whole system of mounds. The whole field, some six acres, is enclosed by the ring of Rath na Riogh, which can easily be traced everywhere except on the south, where it has been superseded by a big raised ditch—I may explain to English readers that ditch in Ireland means any

St. Patrick.

kind of fence not of wire or wood. Quite near the stile is a little mound, the Mound of the Hostages : beyond that, crowned by a very indifferent statue of St. Patrick and an ancient pillar stone, is a singular double rath in the form of a figure 8, which is called the *Forradh* or Place of Assembly. And away to the west, outside Rath na Riogh, is Rath Laoghaire, easily traceable.

In the plantation on the north are two raths, and a third is in the main field just bordering the plantation. I have only to add that the precinct of Tara in ancient times extended east of the road from which you enter, and that in this end of it were several monuments, now effaced by cultivation.

At present the earthworks which remain are safe enough ; no man thinks of putting a spade into the soil of Meath. Yet it was not always so ; and even here on the hill can be seen such fences as are to be traced all through that fertile plain : long rows of thorn trees which may afford a shade for grazing cattle, but have no other purpose, since what was once the enclosure for growing crops is now gapped and almost traversable for wheels. The craft of husbandry is dead in these districts ; an ancient way of life is gone, but the ground is still cumbered with its skeleton. The Meath farmer buys and sells, shuts gates and opens them. These operations he can conduct unaided, and consequently human beings are scarce in Meath : the richest regions in Ireland are lonelier than the mountains of Donegal, and you may drive on the roads for miles without meeting any Christian.

Yet it seems likely that a change is coming, and that the stern pressure of economic necessity may drive those who occupy this soil to till it. If that be so, the raths of the kings will be in danger ; and while there is yet time this national monument should be secured for the nation. Ireland is not so

poor that she cannot afford the price of these two fields, whose "marvels" were so minutely described by Irish scholars, probably more than a thousand years ago, that to-day we can identify with certainty at least the site of what they were describing.

A poem in the Dindsenchus declares that the place had five names successively, and that Temair was the fifth of them. Temair, it should be explained, is the nominative case from which comes the genitive Temrach, roughly represented in sound by the English Tara—the "m" being slurred. Under the Tuatha de Danann, according to this authority, the place was called Cathair Crofhind, and Petrie has pointed out that in the enclosure of the great Rath na Riogh are still parts of an ancient "cathair" or stone enclosure. *Temair* was etymologised as *Tea-mur*, the fort of Tea, a Milesian princess who traced out her own precinct with staff and brooch pin. But so early as the ninth century Cormac MacCullinan, the learned King of Cashel, made light of this derivation; though his own interpretation—deducing the word from *θεωρέω* (*conspicio*), as if Temair meant "the conspicuous"—had no great value except as showing that a ruler of Munster in those early days could be something of a Grecian.

This Dindsenchus, or collection of tracts and poems relating to Irish topography, was put together in the twelfth century, from documents already ancient; and the poem which I have referred to may have been written before the time of Cormac

of Cashel. But at all events we can say that the collection as a whole represents what was written down and believed concerning Tara in days before the earliest Norman invasion, while the ancient traditional order of scholars and bards still existed undisturbed in Ireland.

The tracts in the Dindsenchus agree, then, that the zenith of Tara's fame was reached when Cormac MacArt, grandson of Conn the Hundred Fighter, bore rule there; and they paint in vigorous phrase the organised splendour of his court and the completeness of his sovereignty. Cormac's reign is given as lasting down to A.D. 266; and it is worth while to note that these descriptions make no mention of the glories of Finn MacCumhaill, though if the Fianna had a historic existence at all, it was in the days of Cormac.

To illustrate the social order thus described, I begin with an extract from one of the poems, which gives some idea of what was meant by kingship.[1] *The Psalter of Tara*, it will be seen, was a kind of Domesday Book for the High King's dominion.

"Cormac who gained fifty fights
Disseminated the Psalter of Tara:
In this Psalter there is
All the best we have of history.

. . . . . .

[1] Full texts of this poem and the others in the Dindsenchus have been published by my brother, Mr. Edward Gwynn, whose translation I use.

"In it is set down on every hand
What is the right of every king of a province,
What is the right of the king of Temair in the east
From the king of every songful province.

"The correlation, the synchronising of every man,
Of each king one with another together,
The limits of every province marked by a stone-rick
From the foot to the full barony.

"Baronies thirty in number it finds
In the baronies of each province:
In each province of them are
Seven noble score of chief fortresses.

"Cormac knew the number, being king;
He made the circuit of Erin thrice;
He brought away a hostage for every walled town
And showed them in Temair.

"Duma na Giall (purity of palms)
Is called from the hostages Cormac brought:
To Cormac was revealed in their house
Every marvel that is in Temair."

This "Mound of the Hostages" is easily recognised, rising well-defined inside the enclosure of Rath na Riogh in a line between the statue-crowned *Forradh* and the church. "Purity of palms" the translator explains, as a condensed way of saying that "hostages denote peace in contrast to the blood-stained hands of war." The mound was apparently a point of muster where the king 'showed' his hostages in Temair.

The poem goes on to detail the marvels of Temair, but I shall give here only what concerns Cormac:

and first comes a passage of astonishing interest for the social history of Ireland.

"Temair, whence Temair Breg is named,
Rampart of Tea wife of the son of Miled,
Nemnach is east of it, a stream through the glen
On which Cormac set the first mill.

"Ciarnait, handmaid of upright Cormac,
Used to feed from her quern many hundreds;
Ten measures a day she had to grind,
It was no task for an idler.

But the King made her his concubine and "presently she was unable for heavy grinding."

"Thereupon the grandson of Conn took pity on her;
He brought a mill-wright over the wide sea.
The first mill of Cormac MacArt
Was a help to Ciarnait."

Petrie, in an interesting note, tells us that the water-mill was first invented by King Mithridates in Cappadocia, about 70 B.C.; that its use spread rapidly to Italy, and that the invention would naturally be carried with the Roman civilisation to Scotland—whence, according to another passage in Irish tradition, Cormac got his mill-wright. All this holds together with the entry of the annalists, which notes how Cormac MacArt was absent for three years with his fleet out of Ireland—and not less with the tradition which makes him a first bringer-in of some hint of Christian belief. Thus independent pieces of testimony, put in their places, lock into one arch which can support our faith in the historic existence

of a King of Tara who was not merely a fighter, but a civiliser, a true ruler. The story of the mill, the story of Rosnaree, and of the old King's revolt from mere Paganism, all help us to accept Cormac as the author of the *Teagasc Riogh*—concerning which we must speak later. But let not a significant fact be forgotten. O'Donovan, working on the ordnance survey in the thirties of last century, not only found a mill in operation on the Nith, but found the miller in full possession of the tradition concerning Cormac's institution ; and more than that, found him claiming that his forbears before him had been millers on that spot since the day when kings ruled in Tara.

To-day, the well, Nemnach (or "Crystalline"), is easily discoverable on a slope below the churchyard and to the west of it. *Tea mur*, the burial mound ascribed to Tea, lay west of it, outside Rath na Riogh, but I could not trace it. From the well there is still a considerable overflow, and a stream course is traceable in the meadow below. But the country is drier than it was, and the Nith now begins its course a good way from Tara.

Having quoted so far from the passages which suggest Cormac as the ruler and civiliser, I proceed to illustrate the etiquette of his kingly establishment —which is stated in terms of diet. From "The House of Temair, around which is the rath," was given to each man his due, and the poet specifies their shares.

To King and to chief of the poets, to sage and

farmer, the thighs and chine steaks (notice the ranking of professions) :

To doctor and major-domo, steward and butler, and to stout smith, the heads of the beasts :

To engraver, famed architect, shield maker, keen soldier, a cup of drink—"this was the special right of their hands :"

To "jester, chess player, sprawling buffoon, piper, cheating juggler," the shanks :

To musician, mason, artificer, the shins :

To cup-bearers and foot-servants, the broken meats to consume.

And so on, through a long category.

Most of this poem is purely topographical, though it ends with a note of lament for the destruction of what was so mighty.

"Because of the sorrow of the people of God in its house
He gave not protection to Temair."

But the next poem opens with a fine lyrical passage, enlarging the theme of lament contrasted with eulogy.

"Perished is every law concerning high fortune,
Crumbled to clay is every ordinance ;
Temair, though she be desolate to-day,
Once on a time was the habitation of heroes.

"There was no exhaustion of her many-sided towers
Where was the assembly of storied troops ;
Many were the bands whose home was
The green-soiled grassy keep.

"It was a stronghold of famous men and sages,
A castle like a trunk with warrior scions,
A ridge conspicuous to view
In the time of Cormac, grandson of Conn.

. . . . . .

"When Cormac was among the famous,
Bright shone the fame of his career,
No keep like Temair could be found,
She was the secret of the road of life."

For "secret" in the last line I should be tempted to read "purpose," which also renders the Irish *rún*: if so, the bard would convey at once the notion that "all roads lead to Tara," with the other famous panegyric—as who should say "see Tara and die."

Practically all the rest of this poem is directed to celebrating the monument which can be identified with most certainty to-day—the great banqueting hall, *Teach Midhchuarta*, "House of the Mead-Court." For in truth, as the poet says:—

"The great house with thousands of soldiers
Was not obscure to posterity,
The shining fort with distinctions of the illustrious;
Seven hundred feet was its measure.

. . . . . .

Therein amid radiant hospitality
Were doors twice seven in number."

As you enter the field from the road, turn to the right, and about a hundred yards off you will reach what seems a long trench between lines of embankment, gapped at regular intervals; its lie is roughly

along the crest of the hill, which falls towards the north. If you measure it, you will find the length 750 feet (so that the poet understated the dimensions). The gaps are the doorways and you may make the reckoning twelve or fourteen, it was ambiguous even when the old chroniclers wrote. But there is no mistaking the description of the prose account in the Dindsenchus, which speaks thus concerning *Teach Midhchuarta.*

"The ruins of this house are situate thus: the lower part to the north and the higher part to the south; and walls are raised about it to the east and to the west. The northern side of it is enclosed and small; the lie of it is north and south. It is in the form of a long house with twelve doors upon it, or fourteen, seven to the west and seven to the east. It is said that here the *Feis Temrach* was held which seems true: because as many men would fit in it as would form the choice part of the men of Ireland. And this was the great house of a thousand soldiers."

The poet adds some detail—that its height was six times five cubits and that the measure of the hearth was seven cubits. He adds also much colour and movement, with a hint of kingly ceremonial:

"Goodly was the throng in this wise,
The gold gleamed from their weapons;
Thrice fifty stately couches there were,
And fifty men to each shining couch.

. . . . . .

"Nine times fifty beakers to choose from,
This was the custom—a plentiful choice for all—
Except what was carbuncle clear and strong
All was gold and silver

"Thrice fifty steaming cooks
In attendance unceasingly
With victuals, an abundant supply,
On the jolly kings and chieftains.

"Fifty men standing
Guarded the sturdy wolf,
As long as the king was drinking,
That no trouble might visit him.

. . . . . .

"When Cormac was in Temair
Beyond all high powers for his great might,
A kingly equal to the Son of Art Œnfer,
Was not to be found among the men of the world

"Since Solomon was a-searching
Who was better than all progenies together,
What offspring that would match Cormac
Hath the earth devoured, O God?"

I have omitted a good deal—one verse stating Cormac's daily attendants at thirty hundred, and another putting the full tale of the household of Temair at "thirty thousand in all." Probably no one will stand over these figures: but the exaggeration is not so wild as it may seem. There is even to-day a parallel for the state of King Cormac, unless accounts of the kingdom of Abyssinia be most misleading. Certainly, fifty years ago that country with its high king and its provincial kings, its strange mixture of civilisation and barbarism, its opulence and its poverty, offered very close affinities to what we read of ancient Ireland. Even to-day Menelik's capital is camp rather than city, and even to-day as many as twelve thousand vassals and

retainers assemble at the king's feast in Addis Abeba—banqueting in relays of three thousand under a vast wooden structure. Surely that is not unlike what was once seen in the *Teach Midhchuarta*.

As for the gold and jewels, the statements seem incredible. Yet among the relics which have been found actually at Tara were two gold torques, of which the largest was five feet and a half in length. And one must remember that in the third and fourth centuries Irishmen were the spoilers not the quarry of western Europe.

For the hundred and fifty couches (or, as it is put elsewhere, compartments) into which the hall was divided, one cannot take this statement literally. But no doubt as many men slept in the hall as could fit into it, and races in that stage of development pack close at night. Even now, how many Irish peasants would one cottage hold for a night or two? And it must not be supposed for an instant that the poet meant to imply that this assembly was constant. He put the daily muster at three thousand—probably a lavish figure; yet there can be little doubt that a king of Ireland kept an army constantly about him. Moreover, we are told expressly that in Laoghaire's reign the *Midhchuarta* was Rath Laoghaire, at the further end of Tara hill, and that the house of Laoghaire was one-third of the extent of the house of Cormac. Cormac's prodigal state had proved too costly to be maintained.

I have only to add that we possess two very singular

documents—plans showing the internal arrangement of Cormac's banqueting hall, of which one is found in the Book of Glendalough and another, more detailed, in the Yellow Book of Lecan. They picture a long narrow parallelogram, entered by a door at one end which leads into a wide space or common hall ; from this again a central passage runs the whole length of the floor, and in it are indicated three fires, a vat, a lamp, and a candelabrum. To right and left of this are shown long lines of compartments—presumably tables set transversely to the length of the hall—more than forty of them. The king's seat is not indicated, but from one of the descriptions we learn that he had three-fourths of the hall before him ; that is to say, he sat in the middle, three-fourths of the way from the door. Both the written descriptions and the maps specify the portions of meat due to each class and table. Thus : Brehons (judges) ; a steak for them. Charioteers ; crooked bones for them. Huntsmen ; a pig's shoulder for them. Smiths ; a head for them.

One distinction is specially notable. Ollave poets got a steak, but minor poets only crooked bones. However, the historian fares no better than the minor poet ; he was the journalist of that day.

Petrie notes with justice that the maps are only attempts made by the old scribes to illustrate graphically what they knew from the bardic tradition, and also from the customs still prevalent when they wrote (in the thirteenth or fourteenth century)

among the Irish kings and great lords. The smith's title to the head appears in special to have been long perpetuated both in Scotland and Ireland: Petrie says that in his time a smith would often have in his kitchen from fifty to a hundred heads pickled—his perquisite whenever a farmer killed beef or pork.

Although it may be taken for certain that the tradition preserved in the Dindsenchus and elsewhere represents a historic reality, and that Cormac kept in Tara some such state as Menelik to-day presides over in Abyssinia; yet the comparison of him to Solomon—which recurs frequently in the Irish descriptive and historical literature—suggests that these descriptions cannot be taken quite literally. Perhaps if the height of Solomon's temple had not been thirty cubits the height of the hall of Cormac would not have had this measure: perhaps the splendour of Cormac's beakers is due to the verse in Scripture which tells that "all King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold." But it is fair to say that though we can only argue by analogies to show that Cormac's opulence and the prosperity of Ireland under him were probably not excessively exaggerated, at least the Irish writers adduce a document to show that the wise King of Ireland might be justly compared with Solomon. The *Teagasc Riogh* is the counterpart to the Book of Proverbs. Any sceptically minded person may question whether Cormac wrote the *Teagasc Riogh* or whether Solomon wrote the Proverbs: but no one

can question that each work was written by an author of exceptional wisdom.

Here is a passage from this composition attributed to this king who ruled in Tara two and a half centuries after the life of Christ. The work is cast in the form of a dialogue between Cormac and his son Carbery, to whom the "Instruction of a Prince" is addressed. (I take my quotation from Douglas Hyde's *Literary History of Ireland*.)

"'O grandson of Conn' (Carbery asks), 'I would fain know how to conduct myself among the wise and among the foolish, among friends and among strangers, among the old and among the young.'

"'Be not too knowing nor too simple; be not proud, be not inactive, be not too humble nor yet haughty; be not talkative but be not too silent; be not timid neither be severe. For if thou shouldest appear too knowing, thou wouldst be satirised: if too simple, thou wouldst be imposed upon; if too proud, thou wouldst be shunned; if too humble, thy dignity would suffer; if talkative, thou wouldst not be deemed learned; if too severe, thy character would be defamed; if too timid, thy rights would be encroached on.'"

While the "Instruction to a Prince" contained Cormac's moral teaching and political wisdom, the Psalter of Tara was the register and record of facts, which should be appealed to in the meetings of the famous Féis Temrach. How old this triennial meeting was, cannot be asserted; legend attributes its origin to the legendary Ollamh Fodhla. But Irish scholars appear to agree that the institution was regularised and confirmed by Cormac, and that under

him it took its definite shape as an assembly of all the chief men of Ireland, meeting for purposes thus described by Archbishop Healy :—

"First to enact and promulgate what was afterwards called the *Cáin*-law, which was binding in all the territories and tribes of the kingdom, as distinguished from the *urradhus* or local law. Secondly, to test and sanction the annals of Erin. For this purpose each of the local Seannachies or Historians brought in a record of the notable events that took place in his own territory. These were publicly read to the assembly, and when duly authenticated were entered on the great record of the king of Tara, called afterwards, the 'Saltair of Tara.' Thirdly, to register in the same great national record the genealogies of all the ruling chiefs, to assess the taxes, and settle all cases of disputed succession among the tribes of the kingdom." (Ireland's *Ancient Schools and Scholars*, p. 20.)

This, no doubt, is an idealised description ; probably the system was by no means so complete even in theory ; and, as Archbishop Healy admits, the working of it was no way perfect. The central monarchy lacked power ; and in any case the conception of law with a sanction did not exist among the Irish. A legal decision, whether at Tara or elsewhere, merely stated what the law was ; no machinery existed which automatically enforced the judge's pronouncement. Yet there is one exception. The *Féis* at Tara lasted five days, from the third day before Samhain (November 1st) to the third day after ; and whoever was found guilty of brawling or strife in the precinct within that time incurred death for his offence.

After the days of Cormac it does not seem that the

central power of Tara waned, though perhaps its court was less costly. The northern sovereignty of Emain Macha was destroyed about 320 A.D. by the three Collas, cousins of Muiredach, High King, and Ulster was cramped into a north-eastern corner. Crimthann's successor, Niall of the Nine Hostages, who ruled from 379 to 405, conquered at home and conquered abroad as no King of Ireland had done before him. Four of his sons settled in Meath, four in Ulster ; and this stock held the High Kingship as a lineal possession to the time of Brian Borumha, alternating the sovereignty (at least in theory) between the northern and southern Hy Neill. Abroad, Niall plundered Britain and Gaul, parts of the Roman Empire ; and Claudian sings of the General Stilicho's bold resistance :

> "Totam cum Scotus Iernen
> Movit et infesto spumavit remige Tethys."

One thing which resulted from these raids, when Niall the Scot (need one say that *Scotus* is Latin for an Irishman ?) 'set all Ierne in motion, and the sea foamed with hostile oars,' was the capture of St. Patrick. Another was the death of Niall himself, slain (it is said, treacherously by his ally the King of Leinster) with an arrow shot across the Loire : or according to a more likely story, in the Ictian Sea, that is the English Channel, while invading Britain. His nephew Dathi, who succeeded him, fell even farther a-field, at the foot of the Alps, fighting as an ally of

Rome, recruited by Aëtius. But Dathi's palace was at Cruachan in Connaught, and thither his soldiers brought him, and buried him there in 428. Then Niall's son Loigare, Laegaire, or Laoghaire—whose name in later Irish has been softened into Leary—came to the sovereignty. Five years after his accession, in the spring of 433, St. Patrick set out from Down and landed at the Boyne mouth, on his way to preach Christianity in the seat of Pagan supremacy.

I have tried in my last chapter to abridge the admirable pages in which Professor Bury shows that Patrick came to an Ireland which certainly knew Christianity as the religion of the Roman world, just as outlying tribes to-day conceive of it as the belief of Europeans; if indeed Christianity was not already installed in the south-eastern quarter of the island, remote from the influence of Tara. According to tradition, the Druids, everywhere the fiercest resisters of foreign influence, were already on the alert, and had a prophecy, saying:

> "Bare-poll will come over the wild sea,
> His mantle hole-headed, his staff crook-headed,
> His altar in the east of his house,
> And all his people shall answer,
> Amen, amen."

This, indeed, was probably not so much a prophecy as a versified account by some poet-Druid of a religion which he had seen or heard of in Britain or Gaul. But according to the story, the Druids did not fail to prophesy when face to face with the

first token of Patrick's coming ; and familiar though the story is, it must be told here.

Patrick, leaving his ship somewhere in the Boyne estuary, under charge of his kinsman Lomman, pushed up along the river on foot, and on the night of Easter-eve he was camped with his following on top of the Hill of Slane, a low eminence indeed, yet rising above that flat country, and conspicuous from Tara. (Even on a misty day I easily saw its crowning shelter of trees, some ten miles to the east.) Here, according to primitive ceremonial, Patrick kindled and blessed the fire from which the Paschal candle should be lighted, and which should burn all night to usher the dawn of Easter. But at Tara also a great Druidic festival was in process of preparation, and an ordinance decreed that in this season no man should light a fire in Meath till the beacon blazed on Temair ; and so there was consternation when through the darkening twilight this flame was seen to flicker up. Laoghaire, at sight of it, consulted his counsellors. And the Druids answered : " Unless this fire be quenched to-night it will never be quenched, and he who kindles it will seduce your people and be the master of us all ! " Then the High King, thinking to take quick order with this revolt, commanded nine chariots to be harnessed, and with two of his chief Druids set out by the road leading northwards to the ford at Slane. But as he approached, the Druids counselled him not to go to where the fire was kindled, lest he might unwittingly

do homage, but rather to send for the kindler of it. And they admonished all that no one should rise up before the stranger when he came, since that would be to own allegiance.

Then Patrick came into the assembly among the chariots reciting a verse of Scripture: "Some in chariots and some in horses, but we in the name of the Lord our God." And at his aspect Erc, the son of Dego, could not refrain, but rose up to do him reverence, and Patrick blessed him and he believed. Somewhere on the wooded bank near the parish church of Slane, men show to-day ruins of the ancient oratory which is known as St. Erc's Hermitage. But Erc, who was a student of law at Tara, served for many years with Patrick as his Brehon, judging cases, before he was allowed to settle himself at Slane and remain daily immersed up to the armpits in Boyne from morning to evening—so preparing for heaven.

But on that Easter-eve Erc was alone in his readiness, and when Patrick began to explain his mission, Lochra, one of the Druids, spoke evil of Christianity. Thereupon Patrick prayed a strong prayer, and the Druid was lifted into the air, and flung down so that his brains ran out. Then the King ordered his men to seize Patrick, but the saint, crying out: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered," called down a dark cloud and a panic, so that all fled in confusion.

Laoghaire went back to Tara defeated, but he sent

messages bidding Patrick come to him next day, and laid ambushes on the road. Yet the saint blessed his people and changed them into deer, and thus disguised they passed their enemies and came into Tara on the morning of Easter-day. It was then, legend says, that Patrick composed the "Deer's Cry," a hymn which is better known as "The Breastplate of Patrick," yet not so well known but that I shall copy here the best received translation of it

I.

"I bind to myself to-day
The strong power of an invocation of the Trinity,
The faith of the Trinity in Unity,
The Creator of the elements.

II.

"I bind to myself to-day
The power of the Incarnation of Christ with that of His Baptism,
The power of the Crucifixion, with that of His Burial,
The power of the Resurrection with the Ascension,
The power of the Coming to the sentence of Judgment.

III.

"I bind to myself to-day
The power of the love of Seraphim,
In the obedience of Angels,
(In the service of Archangels),
In the hope of Resurrection unto reward,
In the prayers of the noble Fathers,
In the predictions of the Prophets,
In the preaching of Apostles,
In the faith of Confessors,
In the purity of holy Virgins,
In the acts of Righteous men.

IV.

"I bind to myself to-day
The power of Heaven,
The light of the Sun,
The whiteness of Snow,
The force of Fire,
The flashing of Lightning,
The swiftness of Wind,
The depth of the Sea,
The stability of the Earth,
The hardness of Rocks.

V.

"I bind to myself to-day
The power of God to guide me,
The might of God to uphold me,
The wisdom of God to teach me,
The eye of God to watch over me,
The ear of God to hear me,
The word of God to give me speech,
The hand of God to protect me,
The way of God to prevent me,
The shield of God to shelter me,
The host of God to defend me,
Against the snares of demons,
Against the temptations of vices,
Against the lusts of nature,
Against every man who meditates injury to me,
Whether far or near,
With few or with many.

VI.

"I have set around me all these powers
Against every hostile savage power,
Directed against my body and my soul,
Against the incantations of false prophets,
Against the black laws of heathenism,

Against the false laws of heresy,
Against the deceits of idolatry,
Against the spells of women and smiths and druids,
Against all knowledge which blinds the soul of man.

VII.

"Christ protect me to-day
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wound,
That I may receive abundant reward.

VIII.

"Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ within me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,
Christ in the fort,
Christ in the chariot-seat,
Christ in the poop.

IX.

"Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

X.

"I bind to myself to-day
The strong power of an invocation of the Trinity,
The faith of the Trinity in Unity,
The Creator of the elements.

XI.

"Salvation is of the Lord,
Salvation is of the Lord,
Salvation is of Christ,
May thy salvation, O Lord, be ever with us."

Whether this be authentic or not, there can be little doubt but that it authentically represents the spirit of missionary Christianity in Ireland. Patrick came certainly, not so much disbelieving in the gods whom the Druids worshipped as believing them to be demons, not denying the Druid power to work spells but denouncing it as unholy and claiming for himself a greater power. At Tara he wrought portents against the Druids just as Moses defeated Pharaoh's magicians. One marvel must be told since the scene of it is identified. Patrick challenged the Druid, Lucetmael, to enter a hut with Benoit, or Benignus, the saint's favourite pupil. One half of the hut was built of green wood and one half of dry ; Benoit was put in the dry half, Lucetmael in the green. Patrick's robe was put on the Druid, the Druid's on Benignus ; and the hut was set on fire in presence of the assembly. The green wood burnt, and nothing was left in it but Patrick's robe, which came out untouched : the dry wood took no hurt, but the magician's robe was consumed from off the boy's shoulders. By such miracles Patrick made himself believed.

The Dindsenchus fixes the place of this marvel.

"The ruins of the house which was burned over Benoit, the boy of Patrick, and Lucad Mael, the druid of Laoghaire, are a short distance to the south-east of Cros Adamnain, that is at the side of the Rath (na Riogh) to the north."

This would place the site in the present churchyard. Perhaps Benignus is more authentically commemo-

rated by the round tower and ruin of Kilbannon, a few miles east of Tuam, where Patrick established this favourite disciple. And at all events, of the house at Tara, no more trace is left than remained of Lucet the Bald when the fire was done with him. But Laoghaire's rath is plain to view, outermost of the monuments, a grassy ring on the extreme limit of the hill. Kenneth O'Hartigan writes :—

> "There remains south of the Rath of the kings
> The Rath of Loegaire and his keep,
> And his grave on the floor of his keep;
> The righteous one of the Lord overcame him."

Yet in truth Patrick never overcame the stiff old Pagan, so far as concerned Laoghaire's individual self. He won from him toleration for the new religion: Professor Bury thinks even that Laoghaire welcomed the prospect of his help in writing down and codifying the existing laws of Ireland—as was done under Laoghaire in the *Senchus Mór* or "Great Relation."

That is at least an interesting conjecture. It is certain that Patrick did much to diffuse the art of writing, if he did not actually introduce it. Over and over again we read in the Lives, "*Scripsit abgetarium*," that is, he wrote out an alphabet for the use of some place where he established a settlement. And it is possible that Laoghaire saw how this new power could be used to facilitate good government by fixing records unshakably. But Laoghaire himself resolutely stood out against the new faith, while granting protection to its missionaries. "For," said

he, "Niall my father did not permit me to believe, but enjoined that I should be buried in the top of Temrach like men standing up in war." So it is in the Latin of Tirechan. And an Irish account copied into the twelfth century *Book of the Dun Cow* tells how Laoghaire

"was interred with his arms of valour in the south-east of the external rampart of the royal Rath Laoghaire, with his face turned southwards upon the Lagenians, as it were fighting with them, for he was the enemy of the Lagenians in his lifetime."

The story of that lifelong feud with the men of Leinster connects itself with another historic site at Tara, and the rise of a famous institution. The Borumha, a tribute exacted from the Kings of Leinster by the High King, is said to have been first imposed as a penalty for the misdeed of a king, Achy, who obtained in marriage a daughter of Tuathal the Legitimate : then, tiring of her, pretended she was dead and obtained her sister also. Nothing was known till the two women met by accident, and, says the story, both died of grief and shame. Tuathal in vengeance marched an army in, and laid the tribute on Leinster for payment every second year.

Nearer to recorded history is the misdeed of Dunlaing, another Lagenian king, who, during Cormac MacArt's absence on a military expedition, attacked Tara and killed thirty princesses with their attendant women on the northern slope, called Claenferta (now covered with a plantation), under the

Rath of Gráinne. In revenge, Cormac slew twelve princes of Leinster, and imposed the tribute with addition. In Laoghaire's lifetime, war arose three times over this payment, and the Leinstermen having conquered, bound him by sun and moon, water and air, day and night, sea and land, to demand it no more. But he broke his oath, and going out again on an expedition, perished on the plain of Liffey, "killed by the sun and wind and by the other guarantees, for no one dared to dishonour them at that time"; and so was brought home to his burial, according to the rites of a Paganism of which he was the last royal representative.

Laoghaire's tolerance must surely have been more than merely passive, for Christianity rooted itself all about his throne. The story of Erc's involuntary uprising is repeated of a greater personage in that court. When St. Patrick, traversing mysteriously the closed doors, appeared in the banqueting hall—that is in Rath Laoghaire—Dubhthach, the chief poet, rose to salute him. A charming story tells how Dubhthach after his conversion wished to become a monk and devote himself entirely to religion. But Fiacc, his foremost pupil, interceded with the master. The loss to poetry, he said, would be too great, and he offered himself in Dubhthach's stead, and so became the first bishop of Sletty.

Dubhthach, like all the poets of that day, was not merely a verse-maker, but an authority on every kind of wisdom, and his name stands first of three

trained scholars who, with three kings and three Christian bishops, drew up the *Senchus Mór*.

A convert of higher rank to our modern notions (and yet according to Irish estimates less noble than the head of the poets) was Conall, the brother of Laoghaire, whose dún lay an hour's ride from Tara at a ford of the Blackwater. Some say he gave Patrick the site of his own house—but that was probably inside the great rath which lies in the wood across the road from the church of Donaghpatrick, a good deal obscured by trees, yet still distinguishable for a most powerful encampment. At all events, where the modern church which Mr. Thomson has drawn stands so prettily above the water in that richly wooded country, Patrick built one of his earliest churches, whose great size—it was sixty feet long—earned it the title of *Domnach Mór*, that is *Dominica Magna*.

A little beyond Donaghpatrick is the circular enclosure which once was Tailteann, the place of great annual gatherings. I found a curious survival of knowledge in ignorance, for my driver pointed me to a cross-roads where he said there used to be a fair with as many as forty public-houses open. Teltown, to give the place its modern name, will always be associated with the memory of the late Mr. James McCann, who poured out money and energy in the endeavour to create a true industrial centre at Navan—freeing the canal, opening factories, establishing an intelligent paper, and doing

many other good works which his sons carry on. Near by, too, is Colonel Everard's famous tobacco farm, a focus of fruitful ideas.

Donaghpatrick Church.

But so much has to be said about Tara that even the most superficial topographer cannot pass on to other interests : let us therefore get back to Tara.

Gráinne's Rath, in the fir plantation, recalls the Ossianic story, since at Tara the great feast was held for Finn's wedding with the daughter of King Cormac, and from Tara Gráinne, breaking troth with Finn, fled in company of Diarmuid. But of this the Dindsenchus knows nothing. Ossianic legend had not taken shape by the twelfth century. To-day, of course, we have the dregs of a tradition which knows the name of Finn MacCool and very little else of the legendary past; and any local authority will show you Finn MacCool's chair—an invention of the last fifty years, for Petrie says nothing of it.

The narrow, little used road which runs past the end of Cormac's banquet-hall is as ancient as Tara. It was one of the five roads leading to the High King's seat, and bore the name of *Slighe Asail*, the Asses' Way. This north-east slope of the hill was the quarter where chariots were stabled, *Fan na gCarbad*, the Chariot Slope; and from a little way down the *Slighe Asail* there diverged the *Slighe Mór* or Great Road, which struck through Meath till it hit the track along the Eskir ridge which led across the Bog of Allen into Connaught. The main road by which the hamlet of to-day is approached from Navan follows probably for some distance the *Slighe Midluachra* leading to the fords of Boyne, and up through Conaille Muirthemne to the north-east of Ireland. In the angle between it and the *Slighe Asail* were several of the ancient monuments, now

levelled by the plough ; for originally Cormac's hall was midway on the ridge. One of these monuments was a mound which bore the name of Conchobar, while another was ascribed to his mother Nessa—I have noted how the Milesians loved to associate themselves with the glories of the race that ruled in Emain. But a grimmer memorial of the Red Branch and its warriors lay farther still to the north-east. Here is the story of it. When Cuchulain, mastered at last by numbers and by magic, was slain and beheaded in the plain of Muirthemne near Dundalk, word was sent to Conall Cearnach, the second champion of Ulster. Conall came to Tara to seek word of the slaying, and what he met was two young chieftains, Mal and Miodra, playing hurley on the green sward ; and the ball that they drove with their camans was a human head. Conall asked why this game was played, and they answered that Cuchulain had been slain by the men of Ireland, and that this was his head. "Your heads with his," said Conall, and he struck the heads off them. Their graves were shown and the place where the head was buried, and by it the burying-place of the hero's shield, a little north-east of Rath Conchobair—but all these monuments are gone.

There is no need here to dwell on the other wonders of Tara which were duly identified by Petrie. But the end of the ancient seat of sovereignty has to be told. Six kings after Laoghaire ruled there, and the last of the six, Diarmaid MacFergus, though

a Christian, had constant trouble with the saints. First Columcille brought before him, here in Tara, the famous case of copyright which I have stated in my chapter on Armagh. The king decided against Columba, who vowed vengeance; but the proximate cause of dispute was a violation of the law which forbade strife during the *Féis* of Tara. In A.D. 560, the last *Féis* of all was in progress when a son of the King of Connaught quarrelled over a game of hurley with a son of King Diarmaid's chief steward and killed him. The manslayer fled to Columbkille, whose grievance against the king was known, and Columba wished to protect him, but the law was upheld and he was put to death. Then the king (knowing what kind of saint Columba was) wished to arrest the cleric, but Columba was too quick for him, and escaping, stirred up his kinsmen the northern Hy Neill, and in 561 Diarmaid met the King of Connaught and his allies the O'Neills and O'Donnells at Cuildremhne between Sligo and Drumcliff, and was beaten.

That was his first misfortune. The second was worse. Diarmaid—who, to do him justice, seems to have been a much more reasonable man than the saints—was endeavouring to enforce the central power, and sent out a messenger with orders to enter all forts of the princes, and, where a spear carried transversely would not enter, to break down the wall on each side. But at last in Hy Many, between the Shannon and Lough Corrib, the messenger came to the rath of King Guaire, and the people of the house at his bidding

enlarged the opening. Presently, however, Guaire returned, and in a rage at the weakening of his fortress killed the messenger: whereupon, in fear of consequences, he fled to his mother's brother St. Ruadan, abbot of Lorrha in Tipperary. Ruadan sent the fugitive to Wales, but Diarmaid threatened a descent on the Welsh coast, and Guaire was sent back again to Ruadan's house: where the High King himself found him concealed, and carried him captive to Tara. I quote (from Petrie) the sequel, in the quaint seventeenth century rendering which Connell MacGeoghegan made from the now lost Book of Clonmacnoise.

"Roadanus seeing himself violently abused, and bereft of his kinsman, sent for others of the Church, and followed the king to Tarrach, and there craved Hugh Gawry of the king, which he absolutely refused. After supper the king with the nobles of his court, and prelates of the Church, went to bed, and about midnight the king, being heavily asleep, dreamed that he saw a great tree that rooted deeply into the earth, whose lofty tôp and branches were so high and broad that they came neare the cloudes of heaven, and that he saw 150 men about the tree, with 150 broad-mouthed sharp axes cutting the tree, and when it was cut, when it fell to the earth, the great noyse it made at the time of the falling thereof awaked the king out of his sleep; which dream was construed, interpreted and expounded thus:—that this great tree, strongly rooted in the earth, and braunched abroad, that it retched to the very firmament, was the king whose power was over all Ireland; and that the 150 men with sharp axes cutting the tree, were these prelates saying the 150 Psalmes of David, that would cut him from the very rootes to his destruction, and fall for ever."

The prophecy came true. Next day Ruadan renewed his request, and, when it was again refused, "then Roadanus and a bishop that was with him took

their bells that they had, which they rung hardly and cursed the king and place, and prayed God that no king or queen ever after would or could dwell in Tarrach, and that it should be waste for ever, without court or palace, as it fell out accordingly." A good many of us nowadays will think that Diarmaid's dream is one which still might come with menace to any leader of the Irish people; and the action of St. Ruadan is fitter to be remembered than imitated by the Irish clergy. Some time ago a party of Catholics and Gaelic Leaguers—not all laymen—were at Tara, and discussed the history of the place in such a spirit that one of them questioned what St. Ruadan thought if he was looking down and listening to them? "May be," said another, "it is not down he would be looking."

Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum. St. Ruadan was not the only religious-minded devastator of Tara. Where St. Ruadan cursed Tara, was at the Rath of the Synods—*Rath na Seanadh*—which lies, as the Dindsenchus says, 'north of the Precinct of Tara, that is Rath na Riogh,' just outside the church wall. Go to look for it and you will see what has been a rath or mound till quite recently, but cut about and destroyed by a set of people who are not only ridiculous but vandals. A sect or persuasion which desires to establish that the Irish of to-day are the lost tribes of Israel (heaven knows, we in Ireland have few enough of the characteristic virtues or vices of the Jew!) convinced itself, or was convinced, that the prophet Jeremiah had

reached Ireland, with the Ark of the Covenant among his baggage, and had finally interred this relic at Tara. Excavations undertaken in order to exhume it (and make Jews of us all in spite of our noses) resulted in the destruction of this little monument. They might have gone further but for a demonstration in force headed by the poet, Mr. W. B. Yeats, who, it is believed, "was cursing in rhyme with three assonances in every line of his curse." Everything in Ireland is something of a joke, but to demolish Tara in the search for any ark was past a joke. They might have looked for Noah's next time and dug more freely.

Three notable judgments were delivered by Christian saints at the now demolished Rath of the Synods. The first was that of St. Patrick, which forbade the killing of clerics. The second was that of St. Ruadan—who may not be looking down on us. The third, and not the least notable, was St. Adamnan's, delivered long after the desertion of Tara; for Adamnan, the biographer of Columba, and one of his successors at Iona, was not born till 624. The story of his *Cáin* is told thus in an ancient Irish romance which has been translated by Professor Kuno Meyer, one of the foreign scholars to whom Ireland some day should assuredly erect a statue.

"Till Adamnan's day the woman had no share in bag nor basket, nor in the company of the house-master; but she dwelt in a hut outside the enclosure, lest bane from sea or land should come to her chief. The work which the gentlewoman had to do, was to

go to battle and battlefield, encounter and camping, fighting and hosting, wounding and slaying. On one side of her she would carry her bag of provisions, on the other her babe. Her wooden pole upon her back. Thirty feet long it was, and had at the one end an iron hook which she would thrust into the tress of some woman in the opposite battalion. Her husband behind her, carrying a fence stake in his hand, and flogging her on to battle. For at that time it was the head of a woman or her two breasts which were taken as trophies.

"Now after the coming of Adamnan no woman is deprived of her testimony if it be bound in righteous deeds. For a mother is a venerable treasure, a mother is a goodly treasure, the mother of saints and bishops and righteous men, an increase of the Kingdom of Heaven, a propagation on earth. Adamnan suffered much hardship for your sake, O women, so that ever since Adamnan's time one half of your house is yours, and there is a place for your chair in the other half; so that your contract and your safeguard are free; and the first law made in Heaven and on earth for women is Adamnan's law.

"This was the beginning of the story. Once Adamnan and his mother were wending their way by Ath Drochait [Drogheda] in the south of Bregia. 'Come upon my back, dear mother,' saith he. 'I shall not go,' saith she. 'What is this? what ails you?' saith he. 'Because you are not a dutiful son,' saith she. 'Who is more dutiful than I am? since I put a girdle over my breast carrying you about from place to place, keeping you from dirt and wet. I know of no duty which a son of man could do to his mother that I do not for you, except the humming tune which women perform. Because I cannot perform that tune, I will have a sweet sounding harp made for you to play to you, with a strap of bronze out of it.' 'Even so,' she said. 'Your dutifulness were good; however that is not the duty that I desire, but that you should free women for me from encounter, from camping, from fighting, from hosting, from wounding, from slaying, from the bondage of the caldron.'

Then she went upon her son's back until they chanced to come upon a battlefield. Such was the thickness of the slaughter into

which they came that the soles of one woman would touch the neck of another. Though they beheld the battlefield, they saw nothing more touching or pitiful than the head of a woman in one place and the body in another, and her little babe upon the breasts of the corpse, a stream of milk upon one of its cheeks and a stream of blood upon the other."

The mother of Adamnan bade her son "prove his clerkship upon" the dead woman, and he raised her to life. "Well, now, Adamnan," she said, "to thee it is given to free the women of the Western World. Neither drink nor food shall go into thy mouth until women have been freed by thee." He thought that a hard saying. "If my eyes see food, I shall stretch out my hands for it." But she chained him at the Bridge of Swilly, in Tyrconnell, with a stone in his mouth that kept life in him, and he was there eight months, and he begged for a change of torture. Then she buried him in a stone chest at Raphoe, so that worms devoured the root of his tongue, "and not many women would do so to their sons." He was there four years, and angels came to him bidding him arise. "I will not arise," said Adamnan, "until women are freed for me." And the angel answered: "By reason of your sufferance you shall have all you ask of God."

"'It shall not be in my time if it is done,' said Loingsech Breban, a native of Fanait he was, of the race of Conall. 'An evil time when a man's sleep shall be murdered for women, that women should live, men should be slain. Put the deaf and dumb one to the sword who asserts anything but that women shall be in everlasting bondage to the brink of Doom.'"

Then the seven kings of Ireland came out to slay Adamnan, and he took no sword with him to the battle but "the bell of Adamnan's wrath, to wit the little bell of Adamnan's altar table. And he struck the bell against them, pronouncing maledictions until securities and bonds were given him for the emancipation of women." There were strong warranties; sun and moon and all the elements of God: Peter, Paul, Andrew, and the other Apostles; Gregory, the two Patricks, the two Ciarans, the two Cronans, the four Fintans, and a long host of Irish saints.

These guarantors "gave three shouts of malediction on every male who would kill a woman with his right hand or left, by a kick or by his tongue, so that his heirs are elder and nettle and the corncrake."

The curious will find in *Anecdota Oxoniensia* (Mediæval and Modern Series, Part XII.) the rest of this Cáin Adamnan which details the criminal law as established in the early days of Christianity in regard to offences against women: the fines for their killing, for insult, for a blow, and so on. Here there is no more to be said, but that no man ever legislated more effectively than Adamnan, for women receive more honour in Ireland than in any other country. The Cáin doubtless represents the elaborated substance of a judgment actually delivered by the saint from *Rath na Seanadh*, and if for no other cause Tara would be illustrious. Adamnan, who, like Columba, was a northern, and a prince of the Hy Neill, is honoured to-day in his own country: near the bridge of Swilly,

the place of his torture, rises to-day a noble cathedral which the people of Tyrconnell have dedicated under his auspices. And in Letterkenny, beside St. Eunan's Cathedral (the name has been softened in modern Irish and is pronounced Oonan), rises also a prosperous seminary, St. Eunan's College, where the tongue of Columba and of Eunan is not forgotten, nor the ancient literature disregarded—out of whose remains have been trying to build up some picture of the life that was once at the centre of Milesian power.

Here at Tara, Adamnan has a monument less conspicuous but by more than a thousand years more ancient—his cross, of which now nothing is left but a stump with a sculptured figure now barely discernible. The churchyard wall inside which this cross stands is a link with that later sad episode in Tara's history, commemorated for all time perhaps by the most famous of all Tara's wonders.

The small obelisk or pillar stone set upright on the mound called *Forradh*, is held by Petrie to be none other than the *Lia Fáil* itself—the "Stone of Destiny," on which the High King stood at his installation, and it roared accepting the new monarch. Whether Petrie be right or no, let antiquarians decide. Another tradition reports that the *Lia Fáil* was taken to Scotland for the installation of Fergus MacErc, one of the kings who, setting out from Tara, conquered Ulster, ousting the line of Conchobar, and who subsequently in the fifth century extended their sovereignty of Dalriada across the Moyle

into Scotland. This story continues the adventures of the *Lia Fáil*, telling how Edward I. carried it to Westminster, and how it is now under the Coronation chair. No authority for this tale is adduced older than the thirteenth century, and it is evident that all the accounts in the Dindsenchus speak of the *Lia Fáil* as actually to be seen in its position beside the Mound of Hostages—not a gun shot from where the pillar-stone now stands—removed by pious hands to be a monument over the Croppies' Grave.

Yet before I follow that link between what is so old and so obliterated and the newer memory, still happily and unhappily so actual and recent, two moments in the history of Ireland must be called to mind when Tara was the theatre of great events. In 979 Malachy (Maelseachlain), then *roydamna*, or recognised successor to the High Kingship, met the Danes at the royal hill and inflicted on them a defeat which did for Leath Cuinn what the victory of Mahon and Brian at Sollohed had already done for the southern half of Ireland. From Tara Malachy marched on Dublin and took it with a rush (as the Dalcais took Limerick after Sollohed), and liberated 2,000 captives. It was the end, say the Four Masters, of Ireland's Babylonian captivity.

But the two great champions who so well defended Ireland had no peace between themselves. Malachy marched out of Meath and destroyed the sacred tree of Magh Adair, where the Dalcassian kings were crowned. Brian retaliated on Meath: and inter-

mittent war followed. Yet these two kings, the ablest perhaps that ever flourished in Ireland, showed themselves capable of united action, and, allied, they drove Danes and Leinstermen before them at Glenmama about the millennial year 1000. But Brian was not content with alliance. Two years after Glenmama he marched with the hosting of Munster into Meath, to reverse a political arrangement which had lasted for at least six hundred years. The High Kingship, which since the day of Niall of the Nine Hostages had rested with Niall's descendants, ruling in Meath or in Ulster, was now claimed for the King of Cashel. And, to make his purpose plain to all, Brian marched straight to the traditional centre of sovereignty and sat down with his army on the Hill of Tara. And at Tara, after the Northern Hy Neill had refused to support the Southern, he received the submission of Malachy and was recognised as Ard Righ of Erin. Yet his occupation of Tara was only an impressive demonstration. St. Ruadan's curse still held its power, and neither Brian nor any king of them ruled Ireland from Tara.

Brief must be my reference to that sad later episode which the Lia Fáil (perhaps) commemorates. In 1798 Ireland was organised for revolt under leaders who contemplated such a revolution as was made in England when William of Orange landed. But the French expedition, which was to have been the rally-

ing point of a rising so universal as to obviate the necessity of bloodshed, never delayed its coming: while men waited for it, the leaders were arrested: and the whole organisation lay paralysed.

In the last days of May mail coaches, according to arrangement, were stopped—the signal for the rising. But there was no man to take the lead, and the flame of insurrection merely sputtered and crackled in isolated districts. In Meath the people rose, and from the borders of county Dublin drew to Tara as a natural fortress, where their principal position was inside the churchyard wall. They were attacked here on May 26th by four hundred of the king's troops and driven out, after what was more like a battle than most of these tumultuary engagements before the main war blazed out in Wexford. About 400 are said to have been killed: and the people of the country dug a grave for them in the great central mound, and dragging the pillar stone from where it lay, set it up for a memorial over them.

Two generations later the hill saw a very different gathering. In 1843 O'Connell, then in the zenith of his power, was organising through Ireland a vast agitation for Repeal, and he summoned a meeting for August the 15th (Lady-day in harvest). Estimates of the number assembled that day stupefy us: the *Times* said, a million: and let it be remembered, nine-tenths of the vast concourse must have come there on foot from all parts of Ireland. But in those days

Meath was as populous as it is deserted to-day : men, not cattle, lived on the rich land.

Six altars were erected on the hill, and from dawn priests were busy ministering the sacrament to worshippers unnumbered. These were the days of Father Mathew's power, and the meeting was one of a population almost universally pledged to sobriety. And it has been noted in Ireland that in times of intense political agitation—as the years before 1798—drunkenness becomes rare. The men who listened to O'Connell might be excited, but not with liquor. As he drove down from Dublin in his coach and four, ten thousand horsemen met him and escorted him to Tara of the Kings. Then standing "on the spot from which in ancient times emanated the social power, the legal authority, the right to dominion over the furthest extremes of the island, and the power of concentrating the entire nation for the purpose of national defence," he raised his tremendous voice before that listening multitude "to protest against the unfounded and unjust union as not binding upon conscience, void in principle, void as a matter of right and in constitutional law."

However, not much came of that meeting. We still enjoy the blessings of the union : our population has been halved, and our taxation doubled : the more fertile parts of the country fatten cattle for the English market, the less fertile breed citizens for the United States of America.

CHAPTER VIII

ATHLONE, AUGHRIM, AND CLONMACNOISE. THE GREAT DAYS OF IRISH LEARNING.

SEVENTY-EIGHT miles west of Dublin, at the end of a huge stretch of rail, which runs through bog reclaimed and bog unreclaimed without so much as a cutting, you reach the most famous ford in Ireland —Athlone. For three days' march to the southward, and for two days' march to the north of it, the Shannon and its lakes make a mearing-dyke deep and wide, separating the rest of Ireland from that region of Cromwell's famous alternative—Hell or Connaught. But here at Athlone, below the tail-race from Lough Ree, the great river was fordable. At present, of course, modern science has dammed up the stream, and instead of the ford we have a long weir with its wild tumble of water : but the bridge leading to the castle stands where, in Elizabeth's reign, the first arched bridge was built over the shallows. Guns from a fort on the Westmeath shore, guns from the castle on the Roscommon side, command the pass into Connaught : we sleep secure in Ireland.

Athlone marks more than the ford of the Shannon. It was also a terminus of the Eskir Riada, a natural causeway which led from Meath and Kildare through the treacherous expanses of the Bog of Allen. This line of drift-gravel hills crosses Ireland from Dublin to Galway Bay, and the ford marked the point where the Shannon bursts through the barrier. Thus the town, built on spurs of the Eskir, stands high relatively to the level of the surrounding country, and on the Westmeath bank its highest point is marked by the lanceate spire of a modern Catholic Church—resembling in this matter almost every town in Ireland.

The town has no history in the early days of Ireland, though the name of the ford occurs constantly in Irish annals. Dr. Joyce thinks that Luan was a franklin, charged with the duty of hospitality, who maintained here a place of lodging, and that the place was called after him, *Ath Luain*, Luain's Ford. But when we cannot have historic certainty it is as well to take what is most picturesque, and for my etymology I would sooner go to the Táin Bó Cuailgne. The saga tells how, after the last great fight, when the host of Connaught was broken, and Maeve herself had escaped only by the chivalry of Cuchulain (who protected her westwards till she was across this very ford of Athlone), the Brown Bull of Cooley, for whom the great foray was begun, met his rival the White-horned of Connaught, and how men desisted from their own battle to watch that new

The Weir at Athlone.

encounter. The two beasts gored and pushed each other half over the central plain, and in their going they trampled the life out of poison-tongued Bricriu, which was an almsdeed ; but at last the Brown bull came away with the rent fragments of Findbennach on his horns, and the loin he dropped at the ford of Shannon, and its name is thence *Ath Luain*, the Ford of the Loin.

Bull fight or hostelry, we may take which derivation pleases us : but I do not find that the Celtic princes appreciated this position at its true worth. It is true that when the millennium came actually and figuratively, and Brian Borumha began to exercise a real sovereignty over all Ireland, he appointed a great meeting at Athlone in the year 1001. Hither came his inland fleet from Lough Derg ; hither he himself with his Dalcassians marched from Kincora through Connaught ; and hither were sent the hostages from Connaught and from Meath—Meath, so long the sovereign province—to meet Brian and to acknowledge him as lord paramount of Ireland.

Yet under the Irish no town of importance grew up at Athlone, though in 1140 the O'Conors had a fortified tower there and a bridge of hurdles leading to it. But the Normans, with their eye for points which would give them a grip on conquered territory, did not neglect Athlone, and John de Grey, who was Lord Justiciary of Ireland from 1210 onwards, built a stone castle inside of the O'Conors' rath. Henry III. attached such importance to this possession that

in granting dominion of Ireland to Prince Edward he reserved Athlone to himself as a key too important to delegate. Elizabeth made it the seat of the Presidency of Connaught, and thus for seven centuries English power has sat astride of the passage to Connaught, save in one brief but notable period of history. Athlone is so closely linked with the memory of Williamite wars that I must plunge into these more recent associations before I come to the main business of this chapter, which is concerned not with war but with peace, not with a fortress, but with a seat of learning, not with Sarsfield and Ginkel, but St. Ciaran and his learned successors at Clonmacnoise.

In 1690, then, after the Boyne was lost, Ireland east of the Shannon lay open and unresisting to William. But in Connaught, Sarsfield's energy had left William's cause no footing. The Dutchman, quietly collecting his power at Dublin (while James was in precipitate flight for France) sent an army west under General Douglas. The centre of the Irish resistance—if resistance were indeed to be offered, for intrigue was then busy in the Irish camp—would be at Limerick, a kind of outpost of Connaught on the English bank of Shannon. William's own advance must be on Limerick ; but he hoped, before the Irish had rallied from their defeat, to force a way across their natural moat, and get between Limerick and Galway. He was disappointed. Colonel Grace, the valiant gentleman who com-

manded for King James at Athlone, repelled Douglas for ten days; and, meanwhile, Sarsfield was moving swiftly from Limerick along the left bank and threatening Douglas's communications. The news of his approach was sufficient; the attack was withdrawn.

There followed in August, 1690, William's repulse at Limerick; then the long winter of delay; and at last in May, 1691, St. Ruth arrived with reinforcements from France and took command, not for King James, but explicitly for King Louis. Sarsfield for a while refused to serve on these terms, and this may account for the fatal lack of confidence in the ablest Irish soldier by which St. Ruth completed the ruin of the Jacobite cause.

Ginkel, commanding for William, moved out of Dublin through Westmeath, took Ballymore (half way between Mullingar and Athlone), and then, reaching the Shannon, easily captured the part of Athlone which was on the Leinster bank and ill-defended. Here, as throughout the Williamite war, the contest was between an army fully equipped with ordnance and one barely provided with muskets. But Ginkel was not yet across the Shannon, and the retreating Irish had broken a gap in the bridge. For ten days he cannonaded the trenches, distant only a musket shot across the water; and under cover of this cannonade his sappers succeeded in throwing beams and transverse planks across the broken arch of the bridge. But a forlorn hope was

summoned, and ten Irish soldiers and a sergeant volunteered to cut away the new woodwork. They tore up the planks by main force, then plied saw and axe on the beams under the concentrated fire of an army, till not one man of them was left standing. But the work was more than half done. Eleven more volunteered, the gap was opened again as wide as ever, but only two out of the two-and-twenty volunteers came back alive.

On the following day Ginkel tried an assault by fording and throwing a pontoon bridge. St. Ruth from his camp two miles off reinforced the town, and the attack was repelled. The French General, who had already given it as his opinion that Ginkel deserved to be hanged if he attempted to cross, and that he himself ought to be hanged if Ginkel succeeded, evidently considered the demonstration complete, and returned to his quarters—leaving the town to be defended next day by two regiments of the rawest recruits. Ginkel learnt this fact and decided to try again. A possible ford was indicated below the castle, and a recaptured deserter was offered leave to attempt the crossing as his chance for life. Plunging hurriedly in, and followed by a hail of bullets carefully directed to miss him, the man, being taken for a deserter, was allowed to cross unmolested by the Irish. Perhaps they were chary of their powder, for the recruits were only provided that day with two rounds a-piece, in spite of their colonel's protest. His superior officer Maxwell, a Scotch Jacobite

(everyone commanded under James but Irishmen), replied to a request for bullets by asking "if they wanted to shoot laverocks." Ginkel, seeing the ford passable, ordered the advance: Athlone was taken in half an hour, while d'Usson, the Frenchman in charge of the defence, was still at dinner. Yet before this, some word of a threatened movement had reached the main camp, and Sarsfield urged the sending of reinforcements. St. Ruth, who was preparing for a shooting party, laughed in his face, a quarrel broke out, and nothing was done till nothing could be done; for the works facing the Connaught side had been left standing, and Ginkel promptly manned them.

So ended the siege of Athlone. But my story would be strangely incomplete if I did not recall the main features of what followed. Sarsfield was for a Fabian policy. The English, he said, by crossing into Roscommon, had brought themselves into a boggy and difficult country, where they could with difficulty move, and where they must lose men by malaria. But St. Ruth, the accomplished soldier, was ill disposed to such counsels; he felt the reverse which his carelessness had sustained too keenly, and he trusted to wipe out all memory of it by a crowning success. So, falling back across the Suck into the eastern parts of Galway, he chose with care a strong position and awaited confidently the attack which Ginkel did not refuse.

The battle of Aughrim, if not the most decisive

The Field of Aughrim.

was by far the greatest struggle that had been fought in Ireland since the English and their Irish allies beat O'Neill and O'Donnell at Kinsale in 1603; and it is strange that so few travellers make a pilgrimage to the spot. Ballinasloe, where the armies crossed the Suck, is about eighteen miles south-west of Athlone by rail; and for one week in the year (sometime about October) Ballinasloe itself is worth a journey to see, as the biggest stock fair of Europe is held there. Its importance may be roughly judged from the fact that during the fair-week beds fetch a sovereign a night—so, at least, I was told by a hotel-keeper in Athlone. At other times there is little to detain one in the Town of the Hostings (*Baile na Slogh*), and Aughrim is only four miles distant. As you approach the village with its little square church tower, the road lies level, raised through a bog; and this, in 1691, was a mere causeway guarded by an old castle of the O'Kellys, whose ruins are still evident just under the church. In the village I looked about for guidance, and was lucky enough to hit on a young postman with a taste for reading, who guided me to the central point of the battlefield.

Above the church the ground slopes steeply upwards, and the crest of the rising ground is marked by a ring of earthworks; another fortification is halfway down the hill slope—old raths utilised that day for modern war. From these one could see, looking across towards Ballinasloe, the answering ridge of Urachree, perhaps a mile distant across the

level bog. In the dry summer no great obstacle seemed to intervene, but even after drainage has been at work for centuries, that low ground still becomes almost a lake in winter. The English right advanced obliquely by the causeway (following what is now the main road), but were repelled by the Irish left and driven into the bog. Their centre and left seemingly crossed the morass where a line of pine trees indicates drier ground. St. Ruth at the critical moment charged from the top of the hill-slope and, halfway down it, was struck dead by a cannon ball. My guide showed me what was left of 'St. Ruth's thorn'—nothing but a few scraps of touchwood where the stump had been; yet the place was marked by a ring of stones. The most interesting part of the day to me was the story of these stones. They had been built up round the thorn-butt by an old man with whom my friend had herded sheep as a boy: and this old self-appointed curator "would often be hunting" with dog and stick any of the vandals who attempted to cut their names on the stump which marked where the General was laid down in death. From him my guide had his tradition, and such tradition merits every respect. Part of it has passed into speech: for "Bloody Hollow" is still the name given to a dip in the road leading to Loughrea from Aughrim, just under the lower fort on the hill slope. Here a gripe and the line of firs indicate a passage from the bog; and here, on the first firm ground, men came to handgrips. A pretty spot it is now

and peaceful, shadowed with plumy ash-boughs: but once, they say, blood ran there like a river.

Where in the meantime was Sarsfield? My guide took me along the road far out to the right of St. Ruth's position and showed me where his mentor had

The Bloody Hollow.

taught him to believe that the Irish leader stood fretting and inactive all through that momentous day —for St. Ruth had ordered him to stay out of action and forbidden him to move without express orders. It seemed to me that tradition was right, for here, curving round the bog on the Irish right, a low eskir or sand-ridge makes a natural screen, incredibly

like man's work: merely a steep green bank, almost sheer up and down, but fifteen or twenty feet high. Behind this an army could be concealed, and from the top of Urachree no eye could discern the nature of this curious formation. Issuing through a gap in the eskir a deadly flank charge along the foot of the slope might have been delivered. Irish history is full of might-have-beens. But no arrangement had been made to replace St. Ruth, the charge was checked at its height by his death, and the first intimation that Sarsfield had of his duty came with the sight of disordered fugitives turning back to him. He took command then, and "did marvels," says a French chronicler, in conducting the retreat to Limerick. At the Boyne his fortune had been very similar. Surely the stars in their courses have always sided against Ireland?

It was pleasant to find so much memory preserved concerning the battle by at least one native of Aughrim. There was also a vague tradition of "St. Ruth's dog," who has been seen at night "with two shining eyes on him and he coming along like an elephant," a portent which represents, perhaps, some mythologising of an awful story repeated by Macaulay. After Aughrim, dogs fed so full of human flesh that they grew dangerous as wolves, and men (what men were left) feared to walk abroad that autumn. But apart from my intelligent guide, I fear that even on the spot of St. Ruth's defeat I should have found little knowledge of the

battle, and in any other county practically none at all. Yet a hundred years ago the whole story was minutely familiar (in a highly coloured dramatic version) through the length and breadth of Ireland. Carleton tells how the play in rhymed heroics on this subject, bound up with "The Siege of Londonderry," was one of the reading books in the hedge schools of that day (for in the hedge schools Irish children were taught Irish history—a practice heedfully abolished when the schools became by Act of Parliament "National"). More than that, the play was constantly enacted, "in some spacious barn with a winnowing cloth for the curtain." At first Orangemen had the whole performance to themselves; then Catholics volunteered to play the Catholic parts: and lastly (in the interests of peace and in faint endeavour to lessen the chances of a faction fight) the characters were inverted, a Papist hero played Ginkel, and the biggest available Orangeman strutted as Sarsfield. God be with the old times!—A word or two more of Athlone, before we leave modern history.

Athlone is to-day an irregular huddle of a big town, sprawling out from both banks of the river, with no trace of antiquity. Its older houses have been modernised: one bearing the date 1626 might be of yesterday. The castle was remodelled early in the nineteenth century, though it contains old work in its enclosure. Near it is King Street, where an inscription, "Paoli, Lucas, Wilkes and Liberty, R.S., 1770,"

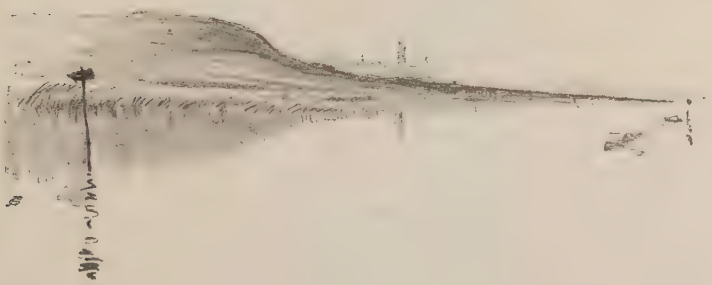
testifies to the enthusiasm of a citizen (Robert Sherwood was his name), and reminds us that Athlone had an existence in the eighteenth century. But a more illustrious association with that age is not far to seek. Lissoy, near by, in Westmeath, is Goldsmith's "Auburn," and the ruin of his father's house is still standing. Athlone itself can show the tomb of Mrs. Goldsmith, wife of Oliver's cousin the Dean, who was buried in St. Mary's in 1769. One of the poet's brothers was curate here, in the days when Mr. Sherwood wrote up his admiration for the liberal patriots of Corsica, Ireland, and England. Such are the later landmarks that we light on, reviewing the history of Athlone—and of Ireland. To-day it is pleasant to note here in the Catholic West a prosperous cloth mill, employing about 500 hands, and turning out honest serviceable stuff—resuscitating something of the woollen trade, once so carefully strangled.

Athlone should be a kind of port too, at the end of sixty miles of navigable water, lake and river; there is a company which keeps steamers running daily between it and Killaloe. But I cannot answer for it (more is the pity) that visitors in future will have the chance to make the journey to Clonmacnoise —nine miles down stream—by steamboat as we did. The traffic of the river was deplorably small. We met few barges; and the most characteristic feature of the navigation is still the cot, or large flat-bottomed punt. You will often see one filled high

with turf; a countryman, picturesque in his big slouch-hat, working her up along the bank with a pole from the stern, and a boy on a thwart forward, keeping an oar out to the stream. In such craft, very likely, Irish armies and Danish expeditions travelled; for the fleets that we read of seem to have passed rapids without any grave difficulty. But doubtless for swifter work they had the long, narrow war-canoes which have been found times and again, preserved in bogs. Still, the cot is indigenous—as old, probably, as the skin-covered curragh: and it plays a large part in the life of these riverside people. I noticed a large haycock growing up on the bank just beside the water in a field that had evidently been pasture all summer: cots alongside explained the riddle, it was the produce of a meadow across the water. There must be precarious husbandry on these callows, as they call the fields which are continually liable to flooding, and the countrymen, so deliberate in their movement, must have a double dose of the Irish gift for working with desperate speed in an emergency, loading and unloading in haste to anticipate a down-coming flood.

But the whole aspect of the landscape on that bright, chilly autumn day, suggested repose rather than exertion. With every long, lazy bend of the river a new variant of the same scene presented itself: swallows dipping in the flat water; slight fringes of sedge lining this or that bank: a perch, or navigation pole, rising stiff and black at the next corner of the

water-way for a mark in flood time : beyond, groups of trees and cottages monotonously succeeding. My friend sketched hurriedly as the boat advanced, and the result was a series of impressions absurdly similar : the perch to the right in one, the group of trees and cottage to the left : in the next, trees and homestead to the right, perch to the left, but no other features. A heron sluggishly flapping across gave a sort of key to the whole colour-scheme with its cool greys.



Clonmacnoise from the River.

Geese afloat ahead of us, every one of them mirrored and trailing a crystalline wake as it swam, the cattle sleepily grazing down to the river's edge, all accentuated the reposeful charm of that flat yet flowing water. Then suddenly across a broad, still pool we saw Clonmacnoise rising like a cloud far off : a mass of buildings, strangely suggestive in that fen country of a germinal Oxford, reduced to its essentials, gown unalloyed by town. The group of low walls with towers springing out of their midst was superb up against the blue-grey haze. But with every revolution

of the paddles illusion scattered, and in ten minutes the boat was making fast to a rickety wooden pier, beyond which, a couple of gunshots distant, sloping up from a stretch of lonely callow, was a graveyard covered with the mouldering remains of what once was greatness. But I need not enlarge on this, for Mr. Thomson has suggested in one little jotting the massed group of buildings seen from up stream, and in another drawing the disconsolate aspect of this *débris* of shattered stumps.

It is almost incredible that here once was a true and living centre of European culture to which men's thoughts turned from among far-off events and cities of illustrious kings. Yet the fact is demonstrable in many ways—in none more clearly than by the extant letter from Alcuin to Colchu. Alcuin, it may be as well to explain, was a Northumbrian noble, born about 735 A.D., who became a favourite pupil of Archbishop Egbert of York, and, after a distinguished career in Britain, was induced to attach himself to the Court of Charlemagne as a kind of director of religious studies—perhaps one should say, rather, as Minister of Education. However one phrase it, Alcuin was among the foremost men of Europe, both for learning and influence. His correspondent, Colga or Colchu the Wise, was Lector (*Ferlegind*) in the great school of learning which flourished among the buildings whose grey ruins now stand on the bare slope by the lonely stretch of river, in as desolate a spot as can be found in all Ireland. Colga's chief

The Churches at Clonmacnoise.

work is said to have been the *Scuaip-Chrabhaidh*, or Besom of Devotion—a quaint title enough for what is described as a collection of ardent litanies (still extant in the seventeenth century, when Colgan, an Irish scholar of that day, described it). And it will be seen that what Alcuin sends to the Irish saint and scholar, is political news of the great world, and gifts : what he asks is his prayers. Here is the letter, as Ussher copied it from manuscripts in the Cottonian library.

"To his blessed master and kind father Colchu, from Alcuin, the humble Levite, greeting.

"The news of your Fatherhood's health and prosperity rejoiced my very heart. And because I judged you would be curious about my journey as well as about recent political events, I have endeavoured to acquaint your wisdom with what I have seen and heard, so far as my unscholarly pen will permit me. First let your loving care know that through God's mercy the Holy Church has peace, advances and increases in all quarters of Europe. For the ancient Saxons and all the Frisian tribes, yielding under pressure from King Charles, some to bribes, some to threats, have all accepted the faith of Christ. But in the past year the King made a raid on the Slavs and brought them under his rule. The Greeks, however, for a third season took a fleet to Italy and were driven back to their ships by the King's generals, with a loss, it is said, of 4,000 slain and 1,000 captured. In the same way the Avari, whom we call the Huns, burst upon Italy, but were driven ignominiously back by the Christians. . . . Moreover, His Most Christian Majesty's officers won a great part of Spain from the Saracens, some three hundred miles of the seaboard. But, unhappily, the same accursed Saracens control the whole of Africa, and Asia major in great measure. I think I wrote recently to your respected wisdom concerning their expedition.

"For the rest, holy father, let your revered self know that I,

your son, and Joseph your countryman, are by God's grace in good health, and all your men who are with us serve God prosperously. But I do not know what awaits us; for some hint of strife has by devilish fomentations sprung up between King Charles and King Offa: so that intercourse between the two countries is suspended. Some say I am to be sent to that quarter (*i.e.*, Britain) on a mission of peace; but I entreat that, going or staying, I may be fortified by your consecrated prayers. I must have committed some offence, since for long I have not been rewarded with a sight of your Fatherhood's delightful letters; yet I believe that I feel daily the urgent need of the prayers of so holy a person as yourself. I have sent you a little oil which is difficult to obtain now in Britain, that you may distribute it among the needs of the bishops, whether for the use of man or for God's honour. I have also sent 50 shekels for the brothers from the bounty of King Charles (I entreat you will pray for him); and 50 shekels as alms of my own."

A few more gifts and requests for prayers on his own behalf and the great king's conclude the epistle, which certainly makes it clear that Alcuin had met Colchu, and also suggests that he had been a student in Ireland. Yet Colchu may have crossed to France when Alcuin presided over the monastery of St. Martin at Tours, always a great resort of Irish priests. In any case, Alcuin was naturally connected with Ireland, for Northumbria, where he was born, was Christianised by an Irishman, Aidan, and in the seventh century Northumbrian abbeys refused to conform to the uniform usage in celebrating Easter, adhering to the old Irish method for fixing the date.

This Northumbrian offshoot is only one ramification of the work which began in the fifth century under Patrick, and was carried outside of Ireland by

Columba in the sixth. And as Columba's foundation at Iona—whence Christianity was brought to Northumbria and to many other parts of Britain—was the most important of all foundations made outside of Ireland after Patrick's day, so it may fairly be said that no religious community established in Ireland after Patrick's death was so influential as that which Columba's younger contemporary, Ciaran, inaugurated here at Clonmacnoise.

Ciaran got his training at Clonard on the upper waters of the Boyne, and there Columba became his friend. The fierce northern saint, the warrior of Cuildremhne, wrote a verse of lament when Ciaran, "the youth, gentle, loving, tender-hearted," departed from Meath to take up his abode upon the bare flagstones of Aran, under the teaching of St. Enda. What is known as the Second Order of Irish Saints was then growing into prominence, and Enda was chief among them. The First Order, Patrick and his successors, were all bishops, all founders of churches, men living an active life and moving about in the world, secular clerics, not anchorites. Most of these men were foreigners like Patrick himself, and they flourished for four reigns, down to 543. The Second Order, native to Ireland, imposed on themselves a severer discipline of life, excluding women altogether from their monasteries. They also endured through four reigns, to 597, and they were succeeded by the Third Order of Saints, mere hermits, who dwelt in desert places, and lived

on herbs and the alms of the faithful. Unlike these, the men of the Second Order were founders of great societies of co-operative labour. Each community farmed its own land, spun its own wool, built its own churches and cells of wood or wattles in the early days. Life was simple, for the monastic rule was very strict and almost excluded flesh meat, and the severities which saints of the Third Order affected—condemning themselves, for instance, to live in stone cells where a man could neither stand nor lie—were only exaggerations of mortifications habitually practised in communities of the Second Order. But the essence of the community was service, as that of the hermitage was contemplation and prayer; and Alcuin's letter with its political budget makes plain that men thus living out of the world nevertheless did not desire to cloister their intelligences. Again, manual labour must have been subservient to study in a place where such scholars were produced; and among the community of artisans great craftsmen were fostered. Yet this came later. In the early days, and perhaps up to Colchu's time (he died before 800 A.D.), stonework was little used. The monastery was burned three times in the eighth century, seemingly by accident, fire springing up among the small huts in which scholars and teachers lived. Classes were held out of doors; churches existed only, it seems, for sacred uses, and they were multiplied, not increased in bulk, as the congregation augmented. There are seven of them still at Clonmacnoise, and

the biggest is only sixty feet in length. Scholars attended mass with the group to which they belonged, as at Oxford each college has its own chapel. The groups were many, for the special strength of Clonmacnoise lay in the fact that it was a national institution identified with no class or province, and its abbots were chosen from all quarters of Ireland.

This impartiality may have originated in the fact that Ciaran, though born in Roscommon, had an Ulster man for father and a Kerry woman for mother; and thus the tendency to identify the religious body with the clan of its founder was counteracted. Ciaran's personal influence cannot, one would say, have counted for much in the matter, since he founded Clonmacnoise in January 544 and died in the following September, at the age of thirty-two. It would be difficult to say what consideration prompted him when he set out with eight companions from Hare Island on Lough Ree, where they had been for three years established on a site still marked by ruins (for it was afterwards an offshoot of Clonmacnoise). Story tells how they fared down along the river, and rejected one spot as too fertile and too beautiful for the abode of saints; but when they reached the sloping meadow which was then called *Ard Taprait*, the Height of the Spring, Ciaran bade them pitch their tent. "Here," he said, "let us remain, for many souls will ascend to heaven from this spot." And in truth a belief grew up that by the influence of the "gentle, loving, tender-hearted" saint and scholar, the place

was so hallowed that whoever was interred "in the graveyard of noble Ciaran" would never be adjudged to damnation; and it became in consequence a royal burying ground, and kings contended with gifts for a place of sepulchre. The last king of all who claimed the High Kingship of Ireland, Rory O'Connor, died at Cong, as has been told already: but they brought his body to be laid in the sacred earth within the cathair of Ciaran.

Scholarship increased along with the sanctity. Men came probably from all parts of Europe, certainly from Britain. Bede, writing of the great pestilence of 664, says that it raged also in Ireland "and many of the nobility and the lower ranks of the English nation were there at that time." Some adopted a monastic life; "others chose to apply themselves to study, going about from one master to another. The Irish willingly received them all and took care to supply them with food, also to furnish them with books and teaching gratis." Such a master was Colchu, *Ferlegind*, that is, not abbot, but chief professor of Clonmacnoise. And if foreigners came to him and his school, Irish pupils of his also went out through the world. Alcuin, we have seen, sends Colchu word of "all your men" who in that year (798) were in the monastery of St. Martin by the Loire.

These Irish scholars were men of note in their day, and interesting relics of their work survive. For instance, among the manuscript records in Paris was

discovered a geographical treatise *On the Measurement of the Globe*, written in 825 by Dicuil, an Irish monk ; and a very curious passage fixes Dicuil with tolerable certainty for a pupil of Clonmacnoise.

"Although we never read in any book" (he writes) "that any branch of the Nile flows into the Red Sea, yet Brother Fidelis told in my presence to my master Suibhne (to whom under God I owe whatever knowledge I possess) that certain clerics and laymen from Ireland, going to Jerusalem on pilgrimage, sailed up the Nile for a long way."

Now the only Suibhne (or Sweeny) mentioned by the annalists within a generation before 825, was Abbot of Clonmacnoise in 816. But what a curious light this throws on those dark ages—Irish monks making their way through Trajan's canal, then open, from Egypt to the Red Sea—not without study of Egypt's antiquities. The aforesaid brother Fidelis (Dicuil tells us), "measured the base of a pyramid and found it 400 feet in length." He wished also to examine the exact point where Moses entered the Red Sea in order to try if he could find any traces of the chariot of Pharaoh or the wheel tracks, but the sailors were in a hurry and would not allow him to go on this excursion.

I derive my knowledge of Dicuil from Archbishop Healy's *Ancient Schools and Scholars of Ireland*,—a work which I have pillaged as freely as the Danes pillaged Clonmacnoise. Yet Archbishop Healy, who quotes part of Alcuin's letter to Colchu, makes no reference to a passage in it which has an interesting

application. Alcuin writes complacently of the manner in which the Holy Church "advances and increases in all quarters of Europe." "The ancient Saxons and all the Frisian tribes, yielding under pressure from King Charles, some to bribes, some to threats, have all accepted the faith of Christ." Charles the Great was drastic in his methods of evangelisation. He beheaded 4,500 recalcitrant Saxons in one day, and other missionary operations consisted in destroying with fire and sword all Upper Saxony, and the countries between the Elbe and the Baltic. Those who would not accept Christianity were driven north into Denmark, and soon all Scandinavia was filled with the fierce population, who regarded the faith of Christians as a badge of slavery which tyrannous oppression had sought to inflict upon them. Like hornets disturbed, they retaliated indiscriminately, and no place suffered worse than the quiet spot to which Alcuin despatched for Colchu's benefit, his account of Charlemagne's labours for the faith. Colchu did not live to feel the recoil of that blow which Charlemagne struck and Alcuin applauded. But Colchu's near successors felt it with a vengeance, and for three centuries literary activity must have been sadly hampered at Clonmacnoise. I cannot imagine students resorting freely to an institution which, between 800 and 1100 A.D., was destroyed by violence some five-and-twenty separate times.

Ten of these raids were accomplished by Danes—

the rest by Irishmen following their example with alacrity. There are two round towers at Clonmacnoise and the question has been asked, Why? To me the answer seems clear: that in a community so exposed, so numerous and, probably, so prosperous, more lives and valuables had to be secured than could be huddled in haste into only one of the bell-tower fortresses.

The most notable of the raiders was Turgesius, the only Dane who seems to have aimed at a complete conquest of Ireland. In 838 he established a fleet on Lough Ree, and from this base plundered all that was worth harrying. But at Clonmacnoise his fierce Queen Ota, a Pythoness, took possession of the main church in Ciaran's city, and from the altar there delivered her wild oracles and profaned the building with the ferocious rites of Norse paganism.

But the *daimhliag*, or great stone church, which stands to-day, is not the building which Ota desecrated. It was built in 909 by Flann, High King of Eire, and by Colman, then Abbot both of Clonmacnoise and Clonard. The sculptured cross which Mr. Thomson has drawn represents on its eastward face scenes in the life of Christ, but in one compartment of the western face can still be dimly deciphered: OR DO FLAUND MAC MAELSECHLAIND. "Pray for Flann, son of Malachy." And in another panel we are told: "Colman made this cross for King Flann." There it stands after a thousand years, marking, probably the king's grave, and

testifying at all events to the craftsmanship of Clonmacnoise.

The church itself has been somewhat pulled about,

King Flann's Cross.

and an elaborate doorway in the south-west corner bears an inscription to the effect that "Odo, dean of Clonmacnoise, caused it to be made"—Archbishop Healy thinks, in the fifteenth century, but at all

events, after Clonmacnoise passed into Norman keeping. This door was indicated to me as one of the curiosities by a friendly passer-by who told me it was called the "Whispering door," and bid me stand with my ear to one of the pillar jambs. I did so while he turned a broad back on me and applied his lips to the other clustered pillar, and through the fluted recesses of Dean Odo's doorway came to me the mysterious message: "It's a warrrum day." I never knew words to sound so hot; they "breathed his panting soul into my ear." For the rest my acquaintance could give me little information, except one piece of statistics which I asked for. There were within about four miles round no Protestants except a couple who lived at an adjoining house. The reason for my inquiry was that, although the enclosure of the churches and towers is in charge of the Board of Works, one church of the seven is still, I cannot say used, but licensed for religious purposes. It lies nearest the river, and its general aspect of a neglected outhouse is vaguely indicated by Mr. Thomson's drawing. I saw it flanked by battered drainpipes, roofed with broken slates; the window frame, gaping at the joints, lacked two panes, and where sections of the shutter had fallen to the ground, I had a view of dirty and unused pews among walls distempered a mouldy blue. The door, of course, was hermetically closed. It appears that occasional services are held there—to judge from appearances, about once in five years. In the name

of common decency, if the Church of Ireland owns a place of worship in a site so illustrious, can it not be kept at least respectable? and, if neither money nor care is available, can the building not be handed over to the ministers of that religion which is professed by ninety-nine in every hundred of the people living round this still venerated spot?

Let us pass to a topic which shows a more admirable side of Irish Protestantism. East of the churches, near a cluster of trees, is what was once a nunnery—built (presumably in penitence) by O'Rourke's Dervorguilla. In May, 1865, the choir arch and the west door were re-constructed from the fragments strewn broadcast on the ground, and the supervisor of this work was Dr. Graves—afterwards Bishop of Limerick, and famous as the first interpreter of Ogam writings.

To my thinking there is no example of the Hiberno-Roman work so noble as these arches. Four tiers of carved stone recede from the widely-splayed opening of the choir, and the innermost and lowest is deeply incut with double dog-tooth ornament so as to give effects of the deepest shadow: whereas on the exterior orders, the dog-tooth moulding is raised, not incised, and the light shows it embossed. But words cannot convey that rich splendour of dignified ornament. Where a gap occurs at one point, restoration has filled the lacuna simply with three receding tiers of squared stone and a string course over it: that was the ground-plan of the arch,

and you see what Irish artists in stone could evolve from that. The west door is similar in character, but infinitely different in design ; all difference residing in the treatment of shadow-spaces, for here is no question of introducing figure or using other than the simplest forms of ornament. What a deal perished with the suppression of native Irish civilisation !

But it is not to be supposed that the Normans came to Clonmacnoise as destroyers. The great castle outside the ring of the cathair (indicated to the right in Mr. Thomson's drawing) was built by John de Grey in 1214 ; its masonry, rent by Cromwell into great fragmentary blocks, lies solid even in ruin. Odo of the doorway was presumably a Norman and a patron. But the fame of Clonmacnoise is all pre-Norman : all that its school contributes to our knowledge of the past was written before the end of the twelfth century. That contribution is on the whole greater than we inherit from any other seat of Irish learning.

In the eleventh century, if not earlier, Ireland developed the art of vernacular literary prose, and the annalists had recourse to this medium of expression. Tighearnach, earliest of those annalists whose work has come down to us, lived and worked and died at Clonmacnoise. At Clonmacnoise also was written the *Chronicon Scotorum*, or Annals of the Irish, which we have in a copy made by Duald MacFirbis, perhaps the latest of all the hereditary professional scribes and

scholars : he was murdered by a Cromwellian soldier. And—more important even than Tighearnach—we derive from Clonmacnoise the most ancient Irish compilation of which we have the original manuscript, except only the Book of Armagh. The *Leabhar-na-h-Uidhre*, or Book of the Dun Cow, contains our oldest version of the *Táin Bó Cuailgne* : it was copied by one Maelmuire, a scribe of note who came by an evil end, for, in 1106, robbers slew him in the midst of the *daimhliag mór* while he was writing—probably not in the body of the church, but rather in such a *Scriptorium* as is to be seen in Cormac's chapel at Cashel, running over the church and under the high-pitched stone roof.

Thus there is, I think, food for reflection at Clonmacnoise ; and I have not half exhausted the objects of interest. When you are there, it is well to make an excursion around and see how the place lies, pent between limitless bogs and the river. It stands, indeed, on an offshoot of the eskirs ; and if you journey south, as I did, towards Shannon Bridge, you will find the road winding along the top of a ridge (famous, I was told, for flight-shooting when the fowl are passing over from the Shannon into the bog). I was trying to get to Clonfert (where, it is said, the west doorway surpasses all other examples of Hiberno-Roman), but the Suck stopped me. There was not time to get a boat and cross it, but I had a sight I did not count on. At Shannon Bridge the usual straggling street leads to a guardhouse on the left bank, while

the entire head of the bridge on the Connaught shore is enclosed in a fort : cannon command the passage of the bridge and the road leading up to it on the other side. It is an interesting example of military engineering of a hundred years ago : disused now, and gradually crumbling, it will soon be as ruinous as Clonmacnoise. England destroyed a university and gave us instead, after the lapse of centuries, a barrack ; now we have not even that. Only a few poverty-stricken and ill-taught peasants, educated, since the days of the barrack, out of their Irish language, the sole relic of their hereditary culture which they retained ; and of these peasants any that can manage it are saving up money for a ticket to America.

They were no pleasant reflections that I brought from Shannon Bridge : an Ireland fortified against the Irish ; desolation, decay, and ignorance, where once there had been the widest welcome of learning and hospitality. Maybe, some day we shall build again a university at Clonmacnoise ; maybe, young men will swim again and row races in that river during the pleasant intervals of labour ; maybe, some day Ireland may again lead Europe. But, God knows, few of us that are living look to see that day.

The Muse of Ireland has her face turned ever backwards. Centuries ago, Enoch O'Gillan wrote a poem to praise and lament over the illustrious dead who slept within Ciaran's precinct. Yet when he lamented the dead at Clonmacnoise, Clonmacnoise itself was living : now it is dead and mouldering as

any of Clan Creidé or Clan Colman's spearmen. Yet since poetry can extract a sweetness even out of sorrow, let me close this gloomy train of reflection with Mr. Rolleston's beautiful rendering of these beautiful verses.

THE DEAD AT CLONMACNOIS.

In a quiet-watered land, a land of roses,
Stands St. Ciaran's city fair,
And the warriors of Erin in their famous generations
Slumber there.

There beneath the dewy hillside sleep the noblest
Of the clan of Conn,
Each below his stone with name in branching Ogham
And the sacred knot thereon.

There they laid to rest the seven kings of Tara,
There the sons of Cairbré sleep—
Battle-banners of the Gael that in Ciaran's plain of crosses
Now their final hosting keep.

And in Clonmacnois they laid the men of Teffia,
And right many a lord of Bregh;
Deep the sod above Clan Creidé and Clan Conaill,
Kind in hall and fierce in fray.

Many and many a son of Conn the Hundred-Fighter
In the red earth lies at rest;
Many a blue eye of Clan Colman the turf covers,
Many a swan-white breast.

CHAPTER IX

KINCORA AND THOMOND

"WHERE, O Kincora, is Brian the Bold?" And where, O modern Irishman or Irishwoman, is Kincora! Did they teach you at school? Not they. They taught you about King Alfred and the cakes, and how he gradually marshalled a power against the Danes of England and beat them in great battles. But were you ever taught how Brian and his Dalcassians starved and lurked and lay in ambush through the fastnesses of Clare?—fighting and retreating, retreating and fighting, refusing even the truce which Mahon, King of Thomond, had made with the Danes —because, said Brian, however small the injury he might be able to do the foreigners, he preferred it to peace. Yet in the old hedge schools a scholar would have learned how Brian's following was at last reduced to a bare handful of ragged desperate men, and how Mahon came up himself into the wooded mountains to reason with these fanatics; how he expatiated prudently on the impossibility of resisting the stark mail-clad foreigners, and on the folly of leading out

armies of the Dalcais again only to leave them dead on the field as Brian himself had done; and how Brian answered that to die was natural to all men, but that it was neither the nature nor the inheritance of the Dalcassians to submit to injury and outrage. And since this chapter and the two which follow it will be chiefly concerned with Brian and his descendants, with the Dalcais and with Thomond, and generally speaking with that great Munster clan which gave to Ireland the one true native sovereign of all Ireland that ever existed, it may be well at first to set down the traditional history of the clan and its beginnings.

Thomond, whence is it called? Not difficult to answer. I adapt the literary methods of the old chroniclers, whom with much wonder I find myself unconsciously imitating. For after all what is this book but a twentieth century Dindsenchus—a topographical discussion of Irish history? Thomond, then, is *Tuath Mumhan*, North Munster, just as Desmond is *Deas Mumhan*, South Munster; and the division came about, according to tradition, in this way.

Oliol Ollum, who ruled over Munster from A.D. 174 to 234 had many sons, of whom the eldest, Eoghan, was slain in battle. Oliol, then, with the consent of the tribes, named another son, Cormac Cas, as tanist, or successor. But it soon became known that on the night before his death Eoghan had married, and that his widow was pregnant.

When Oliol saw a son born to his own eldest son he altered the arrangement that had been made, deciding that Cormac Cas should reign after him, but that on Cormac's death sovereignty should revert to Eoghan's elder branch ; and that thereafter the throne should go alternately "without quarrel or dispute" from the *Eoghanacht* or Eugenian line to *Dál Cais*, that is, the division of Cas, and from Dalcassian back to Eugenian again. The old king must have had a sanguine temper if he expected neither quarrel nor dispute from such a plan. Cormac Cas showed more prudence, for after succeeding to the throne he entered into an agreement with Fiachra, the son of Eoghan, for dividing Munster ; and thus, instead of alternate rule over the whole kingdom, Kerry, Cork, and Waterford became the Eugenian inheritance under the general name of Desmond, while Clare, Tipperary, and part of Limerick, belonged to the Dalcais.

According to the account which has been always given, both Eugenian and Dalcassian were in theory subject to the High King who ruled either in Meath or in Aileach near Derry, according as the kingship (alternating in this case also) rested with the southern or the northern Hy Neill. But as a matter of fact it has always been recognised that the Ard Righ exercised no sovereignty in Munster. From Leinster he claimed tribute. West of the Shannon his limit of influence was fixed by a curious political arrangement, of which the traditional story must be given

Thomond Bridge.

before I enter on Mr. MacNeill's rationalising account of all this very ancient history.

Conn the Hundred-Fighter, Tuathal's famous grandson, became King of Tara in A.D. 123. His

contemporary on the throne of Cashel was Eoghan Mór (the Great), surnamed Mogh Nuada, and the two kings disputed with each other the sovereignty, till at last they decided to compromise by a partition. Ireland was divided into two portions, of which the northern was called *Leath Cuinn* (Conn's Half), and the southern *Leath Mogha* (Mogh's Half). For a natural boundary they fixed on the low ridge of gravelly hills which runs due west across the great central plain, crossing the Shannon about Clonmacnoise and Athlone. The Eskir Riada stretched, as the chroniclers delighted to relate, from one Ford of the Hurdles to another, from Ath Clíath Duibhlinne to Ath Clíath Medraidhe ; that is, from Dublin to what is now Clarin Bridge at Maaree, in the flat boggy country which lies inland from the bight of Galway Bay.

Let us compare this with Mr. MacNeill's theory. According to him, Conn was only the third ruler in a line of invading foreigners called Milesians, who had settled in the Boyne valley towards the end of the first century. A second settlement had established itself a little to the south in Kildare, and became the germ of the kingdom of Leinster. A third host again had landed (like the Normans) on the south-eastern coast, had pushed up the valley of the Suir to Cashel, and establishing itself there, had founded the Milesian kingdom of Munster—which, on this theory, owed no natural reverence to Tara.

Mr. MacNeill has no difficulty in showing that in the middle of the second century a great part of Ireland was still unsubdued either by Cashel or by Tara. Ulster was conquered by the Collas about 320; Clare was won from the Firbolgs by the Dalcassians a generation or two later. Yet I think that the tradition which fixes the division of Ireland to the early date is probably true, for the names of Conn and Mogh are inseparably associated with the two halves, and there does not appear to be any reason for putting these persons later in the history.

In the east of Ireland the arrangement never held good. Leinster (that is the Irish Leinster, whose northern boundary was the Liffey) lay within Leath Mogh, but was generally subservient to Tara, and never to Cashel (until Brian revolutionised the whole set of relations). But in the West, the line of demarcation stood, almost in defiance of nature; for the Shannon is an ideal frontier, and Clare, though it should seem naturally part of Connaught, was cut off from that province by a purely political division. No doubt natural circumstances helped: the road north from the stony Burren over the bogs and woods of South Galway must have been hard to travel. But political boundaries, if they are of long duration, have a curiously severing effect; and though the line marking Leath Cuinn from Leath Mogh is wholly imaginary at its western end, for the eskirs do not stretch so far, I have been assured by a true authority—Mr. James Frost of Limerick, may his

days be long in the land!—that south of the line people speak Munster Irish, and north of it the Connaught dialect. This is the more curious, as the distinction is not merely of intonation or accent: a Munster speaker uses the older synthetic forms, as in *bhuaileadar* "they struck"; whereas a Connaught man employs a pronoun and says *bhuail siad*. More than that, says Mr. Frost, people are divided socially by the limit; they seldom marry across the line, for the man of Conn's Half is a stranger to the woman of Mogh's Half, almost as alien as if they lived in separate islands of Aran.

I return to the political geography of Munster. Leath Mogh was transmitted as an undivided sovereignty from the time of Eoghan Mór (Conn's contemporary) to that of Cormac Cas, who ruled in Cashel when Cormac MacArt was King in Tara—say, roughly, down to 250. Mr. MacNeill would put it, that during this century the new Milesian power was spreading from the centre where Oliol (or Ailill) established it, and that about the middle of the third century it annexed a new province, so big that this acquisition naturally separated itself off. At all events, from about A.D. 250, Munster was divided into Desmond and Thomond, and Thomond is to-day represented very fairly by the diocese of Killaloe; which comprises all Clare, crosses the Shannon about Killaloe, and, taking in the portion of county Limerick north-east of the city, stretches into Tipperary, where about the Suir it impinges on the other divi-

sion of Leath Mogh—Ormond, Oir Mumhan, or East Munster.

Ecclesiastical boundaries in Ireland nearly always mark some ancient political division : and the position of Cashel as an archi-episcopal see is very significant. Cashel belonged neither to Eugenian nor Dalcassian, though Thomond stretched to its walls. It was the seat of the King of Munster, and in theory passed alternately from Eugenian to Dalcassian, and *vice versâ*. In practice, for centuries the kingship was monopolised by the elder branch. But it was clearly admitted that when the Dalcassian line were deprived of their succession, they remained independent, exempt from all vassalage or tribute to the Eugenian King of Cashel.

The Dalcassian kingdom itself was, after the Irish usage, divided up into a number of sub-kingdoms, or principalities, each possessed by a sept of the clan. Just as the clan had a common ancestor in Cormac Cas, so every freeman in each of the septs traced his descent to that one of Cormac's eight sons from whom his sept sprang. Eldest of these sons was Bloid, from whom the O'Briens came, and the chief of Hy mBloid was the recognised chief of all Dalcassians, though the land owned by this sept was only a district about Killaloe—still defined as the rural deanery of Omulled. Macnamaras, Macmahons, O'Carrolls, or any other of the Dalcais septs, might on occasion levy war on their tribal chiefs ; but the supremacy of the O'Briens in Thomond was

always admitted—long before they were known as O'Briens. For the custom of fixing definite surnames was an institution of the great Brian's, after whom the Hy mBloid have proudly called themselves from that day to this.

The greatness of the Dalcais dates from one of the darkest days in the history of Munster. Towards the close of the ninth century the ravages of the Danes abated if they did not cease. But after more than a generation new hosts of the foreigners began to arrive, and they poured themselves with fury upon Munster, which hitherto had suffered less than the northern and central provinces. The imperishable glory which rests upon Kincora is that it was the centre and the nucleus of a resistance to barbarous oppression—a resistance which, spreading gradually, delivered first Munster and then all Ireland from the insatiable maraudings of a fierce and most formidable enemy.

Where, then, is Kincora? Again I say, if we were taught the geography of Ireland from any rational point of view, we should be at no loss to fix the site of Brian's palace and camp, set as it was strategically to control the valley of the lower Shannon. The head of the tide-way navigable from the sea is Limerick; Killaloe and Kincora, fifteen miles up stream, mark the lower limit of the long stretch of level water, lake and river, over which galleys could pass at will up to

Clonmacnoise, and the famous ford of Athlone. Posted here Kincora's rulers could control the traffic which came down those sixty miles of navigable waterway; posted here also they were midway between the Danes of Limerick and the Danish river fleets that in Brian's early days had their will of the Shannon and its surrounding country.

Brian was born at Kincora in 941; the Danes had been settled in force at Limerick from 922 onwards. In 964 Brian's brother Mathghamhain, or Mahon, became King of Cashel and was thus the legitimate head of all Munster; but in those days it was not Irishmen who exercised the real power. I shall quote a passage describing the tyranny of the Danes from the ancient narrative entitled *The Wars of the Gael with the Gall*, which brings the whole story of Danish inroads down to their final defeat at Clontarf. A fragment of this is found in the Book of Leinster which was certainly transcribed, at the latest, little more than a century after the battle. But the actual composition is in all probability the work of a contemporary of Brian's, if not of a man who actually saw the slaughter of the Danes; and I see no reason to doubt the opinion which ascribes its authorship to MacLiag, Brian's own bard. Here is the passage:

"Such was the oppressiveness of the tribute and the rent of the foreigners over all Erin at large, that there was a king from them over every territory, and a chief over every chieftaincy, and an abbot over every church, and a steward over every village, and a

soldier in every house, so that none of the men of Erin had power to give even the milk of his cow, nor as much as the clutch of eggs of one hen in succour or in kindness to an aged man, or to a friend, but was forced to preserve them for the foreign steward or bailiff or soldier. And though there were but one milk-giving cow in the house, she durst not be milked for an infant of one night nor for a sick person, but must be kept for the foreigner; and however long he might be absent from the house, his share or his supply durst not be lessened; although there was in the house but one cow, it must be killed for the meal of one night if the means of supply could not otherwise be procured. And the most fit person of the family was obliged to take wages the day on which he embarked on board ship with his lord, and he must be supplied with provision as if he were at home."

Such was the oppression which the Danes were able to inflict "because of the excellence of their polished, ample, treble, heavy, trusty, glittering corslets," and other equipment to match. Against this oppression Mahon, aided by his brother Brian, rose in war, and "they carried off their people and all their chattels over the Shannon westwards, and they dispersed themselves among the forests and woods" of the hilly country which is now Clare. "Neither had they any termonn" (that is, sanctuary) "or protection from the foreigners, but it was woe to either party to meet the other." At last, however, Mahon and the Danes, worn out with hostilities, came to a truce. But Brian would have none of it. He and the "young champions of the Dalcais" went back to war, sleeping "in the wild huts of the desert, on the hard, knotty, wet roots" of his own native country; and he killed off the foreigners "in twos and in threes,

and in fives, and in scores, and in hundreds" ; but in the constant skirmishing his own men were reduced to fifteen. Then it was that Mahon trysted with him, and when they met : "Where hast thou left thy followers?" he asked. In the poem (inserted here in the narrative) this is Brian's answer :

> "I have left them with the foreigners
> After being cut down, O Mahoun.
> In hardship they followed me on every plain,
> Not like as thy people."

In the debate between the two chiefs Brian prevailed so far as to have appeal made to the whole clan, whether they would have peace or war. They answered for war, "and this was the voice of hundreds as the voice of one man." Mahon stood loyally by this decision, but he declared for a general levy of Munster, in place of guerilla war. As King of Cashel he marched with the Dalcais into the Eugenian territory ; and the Eoganacht of East Cork, and the people of Muskerry in West Cork, joined his arms, and a great force was assembled at Cashel. But Ivar, chief of the Danes in Limerick, mustered forces also, and there were Irishmen found to help him—Molloy (Maelmuadh), King of Desmond, which then, roughly speaking, meant Kerry, and Donovan, King of Carbery, which was West Limerick.

When the hosts were ready—and every man of the Dalcais who was absent as a soldier in the armies of some other king returned to take his part in this

conflict - they marched on each other. Mahon marched south-west from Cashel, down the Golden Vale, keeping the Galtees on his left; and Ivar marched north-east from Limerick, skirting Slieve Phelim. The place where they met was Sollohed (or Sulcoit), near to where the line from Limerick joins the main southern rail. The fight was fierce, but at length the foreigners were routed, "and they fled to the ditches, and to the valleys, and to the solitudes of that great, sweet-flowery plain." The Dalcais did not sleep on their victory, but, pressing home the pursuit, "marched that night until morning," and with the morning captured the island fortress of Limerick. There, having enriched themselves with its plunder, they reduced it "to a cloud of smoke and to red fire afterwards." The Irish had no esteem for walls and strong places.

That day made Mahon king of Munster in good earnest, and he persevered in the work so well begun —overawing the disaffected, and again defeating new bodies of the Danes who tried to regain their hold on Limerick. But Molloy and Donovan still resented the Dalcassian supremacy, and at last by treachery, whose details are not easy to follow, murdered Mahon when he was under the pledged hospitality of Donovan. This was in the year 976: and Molloy and Donovan gained little by the murder, for Brian who succeeded "was not a stone in the place of an egg, and he was not a wisp in the place of a club, but he was a hero in place of a hero,

and he was valour after valour." His first act was to hunt the Danes out of their strongholds in the islands of the Shannon : his next to defeat and slay Donovan, who had leagued himself with Harold the son of Ivar : after that, he dealt with Molloy, who perished in the battle to which Brian formally challenged him. Next pushing east from Cashel, "he ravaged and plundered the Desi to Port Lairge" (that is Waterford) and banished their king who had forced the war on him. Then from his palace at Cashel he marched into Ossory and subdued its king, and so northwards into Leinster and took hostages. "Thus was Brian King of Leath Mogh,"—that is, of the southern half of Ireland : and thus was Munster finally delivered from the dread of the Danes. Yet in Waterford and Wexford the foreigners still maintained their settlements, living peaceably as traders, and paying Brian for tribute several hundred barrels of wine each year.

Yet Brian was not unchallenged in Munster. In 982—perhaps when the Dalcais were invading Ossory —Malachy or Maelseachlain, the High King, marched into Thomond and inflicted a deadly ignominy on Dalcais by rooting up the sacred oak tree, under which on the mound of Magh Adair (near Quin) each King of Thomond was inaugurated by his chief vassal, the Macnamara, head of Clan Cullein. Malachy was still flushed with his great success won over the Danes at Tara in 979, and it grew increasingly clear that there would be a trial of strength between him and the southern ruler. Its result must be told in

my next chapter. I shall not trace Brian's history further at present, except in one detail.

Brian ruled Munster as King of Cashel, but he ruled it from Kincora—commanding the passage of the Shannon at Killaloe where a plank bridge existed. But he did not forget the importance of Kincora's position as a naval base also. Once his sovereignty of Leath Mogh was established he assembled "a great marine fleet" on Lough Derg, and took three hundred boats with him up as far as Lough Ree—plundering Connaught and Meath and Brefny. Brian had learnt to the full from the Danes the military value of the Shannon, on which the stronghold of his race was so advantageously posted. And it is time to give some description of his dwelling-place.

If you come to Killaloe, as it was my fortune to come, from Limerick by road, the approach is amazingly dramatic. The broad valley of the Shannon, here running north and south, is solidly closed at the north by the bluff mass of Keeper Mountain. On your left the Clare hills, on your right the Shannon, draw gradually in on the road till at a point about half-way you see the river spanned by O'Brien's bridge, and realise at once that here is a place where great things must have happened. For the whole of that valley, studded with ancient castles, speaks eloquently of war; and here is evidently an old pass-way from the mountainous regions of Clare into the fat lands of Limerick and the Golden Vale which

runs up yonder past the Slieve Phelim hills to Cashel and Tipperary. And in truth a hundred times that passage was disputed; for after the Normans had come, southern offshoots of the de Burgo family settled at Castle Connell, halfway between O'Brien's bridge and Limerick, and the barony of Clanwilliam keeps their name till this day. But the O'Briens still claimed part of the Castle Connell bank and tilled it and reaped it, crossing out of their own undisputed territory here on the Clare side by this main ford, though the reapers had to bring sword as well as sickle and fight against Clanwilliam for their crops. Here also at O'Brien's bridge, Ireton, while beleaguering Limerick, contrived to throw across a division of his army and to cut the city off from its supporters on the Clare bank. But these are stories of a later and less glorious day; the memories of Kincora recall the earlier enemy and the more successful resistance.

Rising from the low ground by O'Brien's bridge, you soon see how the river doubles to the left under the foot of Keeper; and presently some high ground gives a first view of the massive grey tower rising in front and below you. Down a gentle hill you come into the little thick-clustering town and drive past the cathedral. Its decorated gateway is Irish Gothic, and a handsome example of it, yet of less interest than the tiny primitive church with high pitched roof of stone slabs, which stands in the graveyard under the shadow of the minster. For if there be any faith in architectural knowledge

that little church was built not later than the tenth century, and therefore in that disused little building the greatest of all Irish kings must have knelt—how many hundred times !

Our immediate errand was to Kincora, and so we did not stop yet to visit the churches, but drove on,

Kincora and Lough Derg.

past the big sluice gates with the roaring rush of water below them, out of the town to where the river opened again broad and level. At the end of the stretch a point jutted out, trees on it rising off what even from a distance could be known for an earth-work—and there was Kincora—or at least what men to-day call by that name.

A little further on we opened purple vistas of Lough Derg beyond the tree-crowned rath. Further still, the road, rising now, became an avenue of gigantic beeches; and to our left, on the steep slope, was Ballyally, one of the spacious country houses which played so great a part in the life of that ruling order, now passing away. I was told how one of its late owners—growing old in the land where he had shot and fished and hunted and farmed and governed, and where life had gone so pleasantly with him in his fine house, among his beautiful plantations, looking out over that rich and varied landscape of mountain, lake, and river, of smooth water and roaring torrent, of heather and ploughfield and pasture lawn, —used daily to be carried out in front of the house, and there spend the sunny hours repeating again and again and again to himself in a kind of dream, sadly and fondly, "O lovely Ballyally, must I leave you?" Probably—if I heard his name, I forget it—he came of some alien stock, planted there on O'Brien territory as a part of some great confiscation; probably he detested worse than poison all the ideas which this book and books like it are written to express: but anyhow, God be with the old days and the old stock, and with any man who loved Ireland.

I like to believe that this old lover of Ireland—even if it were only of his own comforts in Ireland—was no mere hunting squire, but one of the gentry who had the wit to value past traditions, and to whom Kincora was not only a shadowy name but alive with

honourable memories. Out from his avenue he had only to cross the road with its overshadowing beech trees—it was surely a lover of Ireland who so beautified that stretch of road—and he was into the pasture field which makes an angle marking the division between river and lake. The upper part of the field is so level on top, so steep towards the lake, that a hint, at least, is given of labour spent to make it level—to establish a parade ground for the warriors of Dalcais. And certainly here over this wide expanse of sward the young men of Brian's army must have swarmed out many a day, if it were only to drive the hurley ball towards the goal, or to practise their limbs in the leaping and running which gave these unmailed troops such swiftness and mobility as to make them almost impalpable to their enemies save in the very shock of battle.

The fort itself approaches close to the river bank, and very steep the earthwork is on that side ; the entrance through the two enclosures is from the landward. Over against it on the left bank the mountain comes down, and it is easy to see why this fort was called in Brian's day *Béal Borumha*, the Gap of the Tribute. A finer natural toll-gate is not anywhere to be found.

And remember when you are at Kincora that the spot is made glorious by another memory than that of Brian. Where Lough Derg has its outfall, the water is shallow, though no rock or ripple gives indication of a ford ; but fordable for bold riders the river is—

or was in days before sluice gates were put on to hold up the water. On the night when Sarsfield with his troop

Brian's Rath at Killaloe.

stole out of Limerick and along the Clare bank to cut off William's ammunition train, William with his great

army held Castle Connell, and held O'Brien's bridge, and held Killaloe in force. But no stranger would think it needful to guard this broad stretch of water above the falls, and Sarsfield doubtless counted on that—or Hogan, the rapparee, did, who guided the expedition. So the riders, three or four hundred of them, followed a track, most likely the present road along the Clare side, till, plunging down off the hill somewhere by Ballyally, they groped their way in the dark to Brian's old fort—no bad landmark—and out past it to the low spit of green turf where you can find grass of Parnassus growing ; and so into the black water that August night ; hock deep, shoulder deep, up to the very saddle-bow, but steadily splashing their way across with Hogan at the head of them ; and then up the far hill and away over Keeper to lie in wait through the next day, and, with nightfall, to make their swoop on Ballyneety twenty miles away.

Many a foray was doubtless driven across the Shannon in that short mile of water from where Shannon leaves the lake to where it deepens again below Killaloe ; and one would like well to have seen how the fierce spearmen, wearing their long glibs and saffron coats, goaded the rough cattle before them hastily before pursuit could come up. Yet, if I had the power of vision, it is that raid of Sarsfield's I would choose to see, with the rapparee on his long coated garron picking his way in front, and, close at his heel, one may be sure, the monstrously tall,

handsome, good-humoured officer of James in his fine uniform, booted and spurred, laced and braided, sitting straight and easy on his big charger.

Still, Sarsfield effected nothing; whereas Brian built up, beginning here at Kincora, a monarchy which lasted better than most things in Ireland, and left a power to his descendants which English conquest by no means destroyed. But, anybody will ask himself, although the military value of Béal Borumha is plain, was not that spit of land a cramped place for the King of Thomond to live on? For my part, I am clear that the fort was merely a kind of barrack; and the truth was forced in on my mind when we went back to look at the cathedral. The door was locked (after the very ungodly fashion which prevails in Ireland), though it was a Sunday; and I had to climb a steep street to look for the verger. At the top, suddenly I emerged on an open windy square crowning the top of this low hill that juts out from the Slieve Bernagh range—a market-place, of course, and what is a market-place to-day in an Irish country-town has been so for countless generations. Here, beyond a doubt, I think, was the abode of the kings. The place was a natural rath; and down at the foot of it, beside the river, rose the stone roof of Brian's parish church.[1]

[1] The name bears out this view. Kincora is *Ceann Coradh*, the head of the weir. Now, a weir could not be where the fort is: but the fall at Killaloe was the most natural place in Ireland for a salmon trap.

This tiny building is less than thirty feet long by eighteen broad, but the walls are nearly four feet thick; and the two narrow lights, splayed on the inside, are loopholes rather than windows. The walls "batter," that is, converge towards the roof, and so do the jambs of the doorway. No one can say precisely how old a building of this kind may be, and some antiquarians maintain that it is the original edifice founded by Saint Dalua, who gives his name to the town—Cill Dhalua, Dalua's Church.

The cathedral itself was built a century and a half after Brian's death by Donal Mór O'Brien, who ruled Munster in the early days of Norman invasion. Restoration has confused the story of the building, and its most remarkable feature is useless and unexplained—a great Hiberno-Roman doorway, now blocked up, in the south wall of the nave. Tradition makes it part of the tomb of Murtough O'Brien, the king who was buried here in 1120—before Donal's day—but there is no clear evidence. At all events, this great door with its four orders of arches and its sculptured pillars ranks with the best Irish decorated work. Unhappily, it is ill seen in a dark corner; and the cathedral itself is not well seen either. On the north side of the close is a small trim-kept burial ground, while the south of the garth is unkempt, deep in nettles and rank herbage, through which you stumble among graves. The explanation is that Catholics and Protestants alike bury in the churchyard, but the Protestants consider that their duty

limits itself to caring for the sepulchres of their own folk ; while the Catholics refuse to be at trouble or expense in the matter, holding that those who are privileged to use the ancient building are bound to maintain its precincts in decency.

But from outside, along by the river, the square heavy tower among its surrounding trees is a noble object ; and indeed there are not many more attractive places than Killaloe in its station by that superb race of salmon-breeding water. Happy are those that have the fishing of it ! For my own part, right or wrong, I fished it for half an hour while a sketch was being finished, and came away—I hope not feloniously—with as handsome a trout as you could wish to see. That is part of my pleasant memory of that day's excursion—a wild day in early autumn, with lashing showers and glorifying sunshine between them. We drove back through the valley under an electric sky, lit by low-arched rainbows spanning Brian's gateway in the hills ; flying clouds made movement and colour everywhere ; and at last, for a final splendour, the spire of Limerick's new cathedral, widely conspicuous, showed up in brilliant relief against a smoky purple mass of vapour that boded thunder. And through all, one was conscious, even when it did not actually meet the eye, of what discriminates this rich pastoral scene from the Golden Vale or Meath's broad landscape—the strong impetuous flow of that great river streaming from Killaloe to Limerick, the very pulse of Thomond.

Of Thomond generally some description has now to be given—taking the name in its more restricted application. When the Normans came, they found the O'Briens no longer High Kings of Ireland, but still supreme in Munster. The rich cattle-breeding plains of Limerick and Tipperary were among the earliest objects of ambition for these new invaders, and it was the old story, repeated for many centuries from the time of the Danes—"Linen shirts on the men of Ireland and armour of proof on her assailants." The O'Briens made a stiff fight for their inheritance, but they were soon driven back across the Shannon. Further than this, few enemies cared to follow them, and for centuries what is now the County of Clare became known as Thomond, and was their well-recognised principality. In a sense, it has never ceased to be so.

I have adverted already to Clare's singular position in the history and topography of Ireland—cut off from the rest of Munster by the Shannon, cut off from Connaught by a very ancient political division. It is probably a good deal different in blood also: for here was one of the Firbolg strongholds, and the Milesian heirs of Cormac Cas had scarcely subdued this older race when Patrick came to Ireland; and ethnologists see many traces of a non-Milesian type among the people of the Burren. At all events, marked off as it was by barriers natural and political, Clare became curiously self-contained. The different septs who descended from the sons of Cormac Cas,

the Macnamaras, O'Carrolls, Macmahons and the rest, might fight with one another, or with their tribe chiefs the O'Briens, but they generally stood together against the Norman as they had stood against the Dane. Nevertheless, at strategic points the Norman settled and built castles; notably at Bunratty, where a little river's tidal creek gives a harbourage about ten miles below Limerick. Intestine bickerings of the usual kind gave them their first footing. In 1268 Conor O'Brien, king of Thomond, who had inflicted a heavy defeat on the English at Kilbarron, was killed in a tribal war against the people of north Clare (the Firbolg stronghold) who never recognised full kinship with the Dalcais. Conor was succeeded by his second son Brian Roe, but there were rival claimants, for Conor's eldest son had left a son, Turlough. Brian, at war from the first with the English, was soon at war also with a section of the Dalcais—the powerful Macnamara clan who backed the claims of his nephew. Brian Roe, driven out, appealed for help to Thomas de Clare, to whom Edward the First had already made a grant of all Thomond. It only remained for de Clare to get possession, and Brian helped him—making a grant to the Englishman of the land between the Fergus and Limerick. De Clare at once set to work and built Bunratty castle.

But the Macnamaras and the other clans with Turlough leading them were not idle, and they gave battle to De Clare's troops and defeated them. Then

another thing followed for which Irish history affords many parallels. Brian Roe, who had gone to the English for help against Ireland, was put to death in Bunratty by the very men whom he had brought there. This was in 1277. For the rest of the thirteenth century the Irish under Turlough had the upper hand and inflicted heavy loss on De Clare at Quin, where the four circular towers of his castle can be traced, wrought into the structure of the beautiful Franciscan abbey—it also deserted and ruined in its turn. But still the De Clares maintained their stronghold at Bunratty, and still hereditary dissensions among the O'Briens helped them. But at last crushing defeat came. In 1318 Richard de Clare, aided by a grandson of the Brian whom his own progenitor had murdered in Bunratty, crossed the river Fergus from Quin : but in the ford, we are told by Magrath, hereditary chronicler of the Dalcais, a strange apparition met him—a woman washing bloodstained garments. Her name, she said, was Brónach (the Lamentable) and she had come to bid De Clare follow her. Not heeding the "washer at the ford," Clare pushed on to attack the O'Deas near the ancient monastery of Dysert O'Dea : and in the battle that followed he and his son fell among their retainers. Lady de Clare, hearing the tidings, burnt Bunratty behind her and fled across the Shannon, evacuating Thomond completely.

For two hundred years after this Clare was disturbed only by tribal wars : and Bunratty, whose

magnificent ruins now afford a barrack for policemen, was re-built in 1397 by the O'Briens as an Irish stronghold. The Dalcassians were learning from their conquerors: and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries English power shrank. But in 1504 was fought the disastrous battle of Knocktow, when Garret, Earl of Kildare, led the northern half of Ireland against the southern, and the native race shattered itself to pieces while the English looked on. The son of Turlough O'Brien, then Prince of Thomond, was with the defeated host, out of whose nine divisions there survived barely one. Yet even after that, in 1510, Turlough O'Brien and his Dalcais forded the Shannon at Castle Connell—for Kildare had broken down O'Brien's bridge—and routed an English army. Turlough's name went far in the world, for when Charles V. and Henry VIII. leagued themselves to attack Francis I. of France, the French King made a counter alliance with the lords of Desmond and of Thomond. Yet no good came of that, to France or to Ireland.

Turlough's successor was Conor, and Conor's son Donough married with a daughter of the House of Ormond—whose loyalty to the English throne was intensified by hatred for the Geraldines. Donough became an Ormond partisan, an ally of the English against his own country and people; whereas his father Conor sheltered the unlucky Silken Thomas after the failure of his abortive Geraldine rebellion, and when Thomas Fitzgerald with his

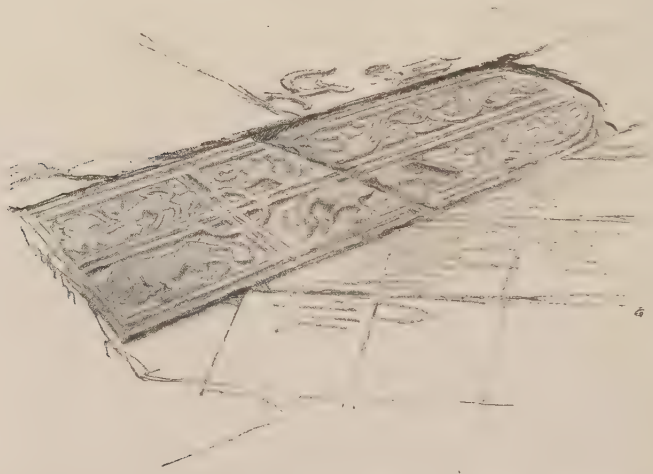
five uncles were executed in London, there was still an asylum in Thomond for the one Geraldine who escaped—the boy Gerald. To the day of his death Conor O'Brien maintained his state and his independence as an Irish king. With his brother and successor Murrough (known as Murrough the Tanist), who was chosen king of the Dalcais in 1540, the new order begins.

It was evident that the Irish must unite among themselves or submit to the vigorous policy now being pursued by Henry VIII. and his Ministers. Faith as well as patriotism should have prompted union ; they had not only their country to defend, but their religion—for already the suppression of the monasteries had been decreed. Yet they failed to unite. A momentary league was formed between the northern princes, O'Neill and O'Donnell, and the southern, O'Brien of Thomond and O'Conor of Offaly. But the mere threat of Brereton's movement scattered their coalition, and next year found the O'Donnell leagued with the English and attacking O'Neill—because, say the Four Masters, "he saw that the Irish would not yield superiority to any one among themselves, but that friends and blood-relations contended together." Murrough O'Brien, presumably from the same line of reasoning, decided to adopt the same course of conduct, and accepted for himself the style of Earl of Thomond with all the obligations of allegiance. Probably at the same time he and his conformed to the new religion.

The resolution which the O'Brien chiefs took under Henry VIII. was steadily adhered to. Difficulties of reconciling succession under English law with the custom of tanistry and free election from among a family circle occasioned much bickering and bloodshed : but upon the whole, from the day of that early compact with the Tudors, the princes of Thomond were King's men, or Queen's men. Signs by, they are the only ancient royal house who retain to-day something of their ancient position. The descendants of Tyrone and Tyrconnel are vanished from the land ; the MacDonnells of Antrim survive, it is true, but the MacDonnells were Scotch settlers of recent date. In Clare, which submitted voluntarily and by compact, the O'Briens still survive as lords of the soil, at least in theory : for nearly every landowner in Clare holds under a grant not from the English crown but from the O'Brien princes of Thomond.

The causes of this survival are various. Through the first great wars of confiscation, when the Desmonds were despoiled, a notable affinity protected the O'Briens. Donough, eldest son of the last King of Thomond, married, as we have seen, into the Ormond connection. His wife was daughter to Piers Butler, Earl of Ossory, who had claimed to be eighth Earl of Ormond, until Henry VIII. bestowed the Ormond title on Sir Thomas Boleyn. Boleyn was son of Margaret, daughter of the seventh Earl of Ormond : he was father of Anne Boleyn, and thus Elizabeth's

grandmother came of Ormond stock. Donough O'Brien's wife was therefore the Queen's near cousin, and Donough, from the time of his marriage, had sided consistently with the English interest in Ireland. He had attacked and taken the O'Brien castle of Carrigagunnel on the Limerick shore; and he



The Tombstone of King Donal Mór, in Limerick Cathedral.

had been wounded in battle against Silken Thomas at Jerpoint. After the death of his father Conor, when his uncle, Murrough the Tanist, made definitive submission to Henry, and accepted the Earldom in place of his native principality, Donough was reconciled with the head of his house; and the two repaired together to Henry's court, where they were duly admitted to the peerage—Murrough as Earl of Thomond and Baron of Inchiquin, with

succession for his descendants to the barony: and Donough as Baron of Ibrickan, with succession for himself and his descendants to the Earldom. And in 1577, Donough's heir, Conor, third Earl of Thomond, is recognised in a letter of Elizabeth as her "right trusty and well-beloved cousin." Donough O'Brien's politic alliance with the house of Ormond had indeed secured to his stock a strong backing: and his descendants held steady to the winning cause, though the line of Murrough broke into rebellion more than once, and suffered for it. But in general the O'Brien clan were solid for the Crown in emergencies, and during the wars against O'Neill and Red Hugh they threw themselves actively into the struggle. In the battle fought at Assaroe on the Erne in 1597, the fourth Baron Inchiquin fell fighting under the command of his kinsman Thomond against the O'Donnells' army. The Inchiquin title had been granted to the heirs of Murrough the Tanist when it was decreed that the Earldom of Thomond should fall to Donough, son of Murrough's elder brother. This peerage has survived the grant to the elder branch, and the heads of the O'Brien clan to-day trace their descent to Murrough, who surrendered his kingdom, and not to Conor who died King of Thomond.

Elizabeth's protection carried the O'Briens safely into the seventeenth century, and the confiscations under James were directed chiefly against Ulster. But in the wars which began with the rebellion of

1641 the O'Briens were deeply concerned. The region of Thomond itself stood on the whole for the Catholic cause, and increasingly so as that cause defined itself as the cause of Ireland. The Confederate Assembly, driven out of Kilkenny, fell back on Ennis, the chief town of Clare; and it is a notable and pathetic fact that the school opened by the Franciscans at Quin Abbey filled up at once with scholars till the number reached 800. Catholic Ireland, then only recently deprived by English law of the right to education, had not yet grown callous to the lack of it. Limerick, too, was a stronghold of the Catholic party. But the actual heads of Thomond, who were Protestants, and by this time traditional supporters of English rule, acted in no Irish spirit. The Earl of Thomond, a man of little energy, avoided taking any conspicuous part. But what he lacked in determination was amply supplied by the head of the younger branch, Murrough, fifth Earl of Inchiquin. This nobleman had served an apprenticeship to war in Italy under the Spanish colours: and returning to Ireland in 1639, had thrown himself into zealous support of Strafford. When the insurrection broke out in 1641, Inchiquin was foremost amongst the leaders who fought to suppress it in Munster. But in England also rebellion had broken out, and when Charles (never lucky in his choice of men) refused this brilliant soldier the office of Lord-President of Munster, Inchiquin in anger threw in his lot with the Parliamentary party and

obtained from them the coveted honour. His methods of warfare in the succeeding years earned him the name of *An Tothdin*, the Burner ; one of his chief exploits was the storm and sack of Cashel, once the royal stronghold of his race. But, zealous though he might be in repressing the rebel Irish, with the English rebels he would not go beyond a certain way. News of danger to the King threw him into alliance with Ormond, an alliance which affected with paralysis whoever embraced it. Neither caring for the Irish cause nor for the cause which had come to be that of England, Inchiquin found himself driven to quit his country for the Continent, where he served the King of France in Catalonia till his chequered career was marked by a new vicissitude : an Algerian Corsair captured him on the seas. From this bondage he was liberated by the intervention of the English Parliament, where reaction against the Protectorate was setting in, and Inchiquin returned with the Restoration, having in the interval reverted to the belief of his Catholic ancestors.

The confiscations under Cromwell had made even wilder confusion in Clare than in the rest of Ireland. Cromwell's project, as every one knows, was to banish all the Irish west of the Shannon—all lands owned by Catholics in the other three provinces being forfeited and assigned to certain adventurers who advanced moneys, and to soldiers in satisfaction of their pay. Yet since even this did not suffice, it was decreed that a belt of land, four miles deep,

around the west coast from Sligo town southwards, and so up the north shore of the Shannon to Limerick, should also be ear-marked for settlement by Protestants. To the native or Catholic Irish driven out from the eastward provinces, lands were to be assigned in Clare or Connaught answerable to their previous holdings.

Thus when the exiles from Clare returned with the Restoration they found a double complication. Their sea-bordering lands had been assigned to Protestant adventurers or soldiers—like those of the rest of Ireland—but their other territories had been largely granted to Catholics driven across the Shannon. Yet whoever suffered, it was not the O'Briens. The Earl of Thomond as a Protestant had escaped confiscation: Inchiquin returned in high favour, and was restored and compensated; while another notable branch of the O'Briens was promoted to a title, which their descendants rendered illustrious for ever.[1]

At the little bay of Carrigaholt, near Loop Head and the mouth of Shannon, stands an ancient castle,

[1] Donough O'Brien of Dromoland, ancestor of the present Lord Inchiquin, was even better secured. As things fell out, he owed security to the fact that his father, Conor of Lemeneagh, had been killed in a skirmish fighting for the king. But his widowed mother had guarded against the other eventuality by marrying Cooper, captain of the Parliamentary troops who garrisoned Lemeneagh. Moya Ruadh, as she was called, was a woman of character. She is said to have killed Captain Cooper by a kick in the stomach administered while he was shaving. Her portrait, still owned by the Macnamaras (from whom she sprang), shows a lady with Queen Elizabeth's colouring, and heavy resolute face.

with its tall tower more than commonly well preserved. To this after the Restoration returned Sir Daniel O'Brien, a veteran of the wars in Ireland, who had actually fought for Elizabeth in his youth, and who in his old age had fought for Charles till nothing but loyalty was left him. For once justice was done; the huge confiscated estates—84,000 acres—were restored, and Sir Daniel was ennobled as first Viscount Clare. Twenty-seven years later his grandson, the fourth Viscount, no less loyal to the Stuarts, fought at the Boyne for James, and after Limerick went with the regiment already known as "Clare's Dragoons" into the service of King Louis. The wide estate in Clare was confiscated and bestowed on Van Keppel, Earl of Albemarle, who sold it to three gentlemen, Burton, Westby, and MacDonnell; and their descendants still keep the orange-lily blooming in the stony soil of West Clare.

The history of the exiled O'Briens is not obscure. In 1693 Clare's Dragoons fought under Catinat at Marsaglia, helped to beat Prince Eugene in that bitter fight, but left Lord Clare dead on the field. His successor, the fifth Viscount, fought at both battles of Blenheim, shared in the victory of the first, and from the rout in the second cut his way out of the village of Oberklau. At Ramillies, two years later, his brigade had the same task, and not merely saved its own colours, but carried two hostile standards in triumph to Bruges. But Lord Clare fell as his predecessor had fallen, and the next

Viscount was a child of seven years old. Another O'Brien (Murrough, who had captured the colours at Ramillies) was appointed to command, only, as it were, *ad interim*, till the child (already enrolled as a captain) should step into the place now consecrated to his title. He was barely of age when on Murrough's death his commission was made out as colonel-in-chief of the regiment.

The young lord was allowed to visit London, and was presented at court by the Earl of Thomond. Thomond was sonless, and Clare was next in succession to the title; the old Earl eagerly desired to devise his estates to this scion of so famous a line. Nothing but the question of religion stood in the way, it is said, for George I. was ready to overlook bygone politics in such a matter. It was a great bribe, but unavailing. Clare went back into exile and remained a soldier of France—to whose colours men flocked steadily from the mountains and cliffy shores of Moyarta and Corcabascinn. From 1733 onwards he was in active service; in 1741, on the Earl of Thomond's death, he assumed the title by right of succession in defiance of the attainder; and as Mareschal Comte de Thomond he commanded the Irish Brigade at Dettingen—when George II., seeing how the Irish fought, cursed the laws which deprived him of such subjects. In 1745 the same hereditary chief commanded the Brigade at Fontenoy, where, to the fancy of all Irishmen then and since, Ireland had her brief moment of triumph, her

desperate retaliation for the penal laws which filled the ranks of Clare's brigade. Has it not been written, and by one who has little sympathy with the surviving spirit of revolt in Ireland, how strange craft with strange sailors were seen upon the western sea—the souls of those who fought and fell, making swift way, like homing pigeons, to Corcabascinn, that westernmost promontory of Clare.

> "Men of Corca Bascinn, men of Clare's brigade,
> Hearken, stony hills of Clare, hear the charge we made;
> See us come together, singing from the fight,
> Home to Corca Bascinn in the morning light."

The Clare of Fontenoy died in 1761; his one surviving son, the seventh Viscount, died in 1774 without issue, and thus the illustrious title perished. But George III., with a fine sense of fitness, revived it for the Irishman who took perhaps the most notorious part in the political intrigues which secured the passing of the Union.

For the Union there voted Murrough O'Brien, fifth Earl of Inchiquin, and for him (but not, I am glad to say, on this account) was resuscitated a title of some note in the O'Brien line. He was named Marquis of Thomond, but also, more appropriately, Baron of Taplow, Hants. These honours, like many another creation of that date, were not long transmitted. On the extinction of the Marquisate of Thomond, it was proved that an heir to the barony of Inchiquin existed in the person of Sir Lucius O'Brien of Dromoland, whose grandfather

and namesake had played a most honourable part in the establishment of Grattan's parliament, and whose father had registered his vote like an honest gentleman against the Union. Despite these progenitors the new Lord Inchiquin himself was a steady Tory in Irish politics; but his brother, William Smith O'Brien, inherited from them a distaste for the methods of English rule which led him, after constitutional agitation proved barren of results, to project rebellion, and finally, as a kind of supreme protest, it seems to take the field without the least glimmering hope of success. Scarcely any Irish rebellion has been so aimless and ill-considered; yet perhaps, because he had a good deal to lose and sacrificed it boldly, Thomond has to-day as much kindness for the Protestant who incurred sentence of ignominious death in attempting to defend the cause of Catholic Ireland, as for those heroes of Thomond's own faith who shed their blood gloriously on foreign battlefields fighting for alien kings.

I have traced the history of the O'Briens, for in a sense it is the history of Clare. So also in his "Story of an Irish Sept," Dr. Macnamara, telling the story of his own people, tells the story of Thomond. The Macnamaras, for centuries chief men in Clare under the O'Briens, are still large landowners in the county, surviving like the O'Briens as Protestant gentry. They had great warriors in the past: but I confess that the two personages among them who most interest me were somewhat ill-seen

in their own day. One was Thomas, the duellist, known as Fireball Macnamara, whose early feats with the sword rivalled d'Artagnan's. In France he killed two antagonists one after the other before breakfast in a morning : a succession of these exploits occasioned his migration to Flanders ; and thence for similar causes he removed to London, where ultimately he was led into the indiscretion of highway robbery. "Ten ladies dressed in white satin, and introduced by two ambassadors," petitioned Queen Anne for a pardon : the other misdemeanants got off—for the freak was all among gentlemen—but Thomas was worse than a robber, he was an Irish rebel, who had served in the French army, and so he swung for it. They cherish in Clare (I learnt it in a third-class railway carriage) the tradition of his picturesque name for two pistols which he favoured—*Bás gan Sagart* and *Béal na Fírinne*—"Death unshriven" and "Truthteller."

The poetic strain which is indicated in this waif of tradition shines with full lustre in another scion of the stock. Red Donough Macnamara, from whose finest poem I have borrowed the title of this book, came of a family which had fallen somewhat low in the days of the penal laws, and lived near Cratloe, about six miles from Limerick, where the lower hill slopes are still covered with remnants of the original forest, from which it is said a King of Thomond sent oak trees to William Rufus for the roofing of Westminster Hall. Many changes have gone over Ireland

since Red Donough was born in Cratloe, but the Macnamaras from whom he came are still there—and still smiths, as his father was. This boy showed talent, and was sent abroad to get the education which should fit him for the priesthood ; but his talents were more conspicuous than his devotion, and about 1738 he arrived in County Waterford, an outcast from the French seminary. Here, in the mountains which separate the plains of Tipperary from Dungarvan, he joined himself to William Moran, a hedge-schoolmaster, who kept a "classical academy." Readers of Carleton will not need to be told how these schools of Munster, maintained in defiance of the law by the peasantry and farmers, kept alive a real tradition of learning—tinctured indeed with pedantry, yet genuine, and sought after like water in a desert.

Moran and his colleague were both poets, and maintained the traditional Irish freedom of satiric verse—with the traditional result that the lampooned had recourse to violence. The partisans of a libelled damsel burnt the school (no very elaborate structure, doubtless) over the pair, and they went each his own way to set up business in another neighbourhood. But Red Donough's new academy had little success, and he decided to emigrate. In this also, failure dogged him ; his ship was driven back, and the result was a burlesque Æneid, called *Eachtra Ghiolla an Abhraoin*, "the April Fool's Tale." A second attempt brought him to Newfoundland ; but, ever a rolling stone, he

crossed and recrossed the Atlantic three times, and it was at Hamburg, in the New England Colonies, that he wrote his song of an exile's homeward yearning, *Bán-Chnoic Eireann, O!* Yet he ended his days in Ireland after a life of unusual length. In 1800, then, it is said, aged ninety, he composed a Latin elegy in creditable longs and shorts on the death of his compeer, Teague O'Sullivan, known as Tadhg Gaodlach. The verses allude also to the death of an even better known Irish poet, Eugene O'Sullivan, Eoghan Ruadh, like Teague, a Kerry man, who died in 1784. Red Donough himself survived till 1814, a pensioner on the bounty of other hedge school teachers; and with him died, one may say, the line of these Munster poets, part scholars, part pedants, part men of genius, Bohemians in the heart of rural life, often drunken, often in trouble with the priests, yet always loyal to the faith of nationalism—who, perhaps more than any other force, kept heart and brain alive in the enslaved Catholic peasantry during the darkest and most evil days that their race ever went through. Swift, Molyneux, Lucas, Grattan even, were barely names to Irish-speaking Ireland; its prophets and teachers, its true leaders, when the hereditary chiefs had flown with the wild geese to follow fortune in strange lands, were these half taught randy vagabond poets of the Gael. Half a century ago their poems were treasured in manuscripts through the cottages and farmsteads of Ireland; since the "national" schools have been at work, the language is extinct in all but the richer

portions of the country and it was in the richer portions among the well-to-do farmers that the hedge schools were maintained; the manuscripts are burnt or lost, save some few—*quota pars!*—which the Irish of to-day, barely at the eleventh hour, are rescuing from oblivion and setting out in print with a piety and zeal, belated, indeed, yet better late than never.

DUBLIN FROM THE NORTH BULL AT CLONTARF.

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CHAPTER X

DUBLIN BAY AND CLONTARF

It has been said already in this book that the ancient Irish were no builders of cities ; that the wars of the Irish among themselves recount no sieges of walled towns. Yet for three centuries before the Normans came to Ireland, Dublin was a town by far the most important in its own country and hardly inferior to London itself. This chapter is designed to present, in however brief a view, the sequence of early historic associations that link themselves with the deep central bay which breaks the straight Irish coast-line between the Boyne and Wexford Harbour. It is well to realise the configuration of this famous and most beautiful haven.

Dublin looks eastward upon the sea—a shallow sea, blue like all the seas of Ireland, yet not with the deep blue-green of the Atlantic ; pale rather, and sparkling in its lighter-toned expanses, easily passing into greys and silvers. The mountains which border it, facing the sun of morning, tend to the same lovely faintness, seen through a transverse mist of sunlight ;

but they are more beautiful still when shadow deepens them into the full purples and greens and browns of evening. This mountain mass, which makes up the whole county of Wicklow, is the southern boundary of Dublin; and a low spur of rock, thrust eastward from the hills into the sea and continued across a deep narrow sound by the rocky island of Dalkey, makes the southern arm of the bay. Dunleary (known as Kingstown since the day when George IV. landed here "in the promise and bloom of threescore" to visit "the land which he loved—as his bride"), offers its deep water harbour on the inner edge of this promontory; and from that point a circling sweep of low featureless shore curves northward for a matter of fourteen miles, till it meets the narrow sandy neck of the Howth peninsula. Howth itself is a landmark of extraordinary interest. All to the west of Dublin, and all to the north, is a plain stretching away westward almost dead level to the Shannon, and north with very slight undulations to the Carlingford range of hills. But here, on the northern limit of the Bay, is flung down this detached block of mountain—for if cliff and rock and heather and bold outline can make a mountain, Howth surely is one, though barely half a thousand feet in height; and, rising abruptly from sea and plain, it dominates the whole landscape.

Thus it happens that the citizens of Dublin have within easy command a greater variety of beautiful

country than is known to me near any other town. Inland, even if the broad pastures fill us with regret for a vanished population (and I fear that hunting men in Dublin do not weep greatly for a change which has brought the finest galloping ground in the world almost to their door), yet there is the Liffey, a river of beauty incredible to those who see only the foul ditch with its paltry flow of water between the quays. Northward, Howth is easily reached ; and from it you look across the bay to Dublin, sheltered under the rounded bulk of mountains, to the south of which there springs from off their long slopes the lovely line of those Wicklow Hills, in English speech called The Sugar Loaves, but in Irish Slieve Cualann. From greater peak to lesser peak you follow these delicate shapes, profiled against the sky, till the long serrated mass of Bray Head, dropping steeply down into the sea, carries the eye to a conclusion so perfect that, like some Italian landscapes, it suggests the thought of a deliberate artist.

Even by night, when the hills are hidden, all the shore facing Dublin enjoys a noble spectacle in the long curving line of lights—a sweep of twelve miles —which fringes the dim water. But for the beauty of all beauties near Dublin, I would bring any lover of landscape—by choice, on a clear day after rain, while clouds and their shadows drifted from west to east over a sunlit plain—up on to those mountains which give a romantic vista to every southward-

leading street in the city. Even in winter it is glorious to see from there how

> "The sounding city, rich and warm,
> Smoulders and glitters in the plain."

But in summer, or still better, in spring, is the time to view central Ireland spread out immeasurably in green fields, with little wooded eminences conspicuous here and there among them. And on a lucky day, beyond that glimmering plain, whose greenness in the far distance seems to grow translucent, you shall see sixty miles away on the northern horizon the exquisite outline of the Mourne Mountains defined in purest blue, from Slieve Gullion, standing inland and apart, to where Slieve Donard plunges his roots into the sea.

But the old chiefs of Ireland, and the Norse Vikings, regarding the matter from their several points of view, had other reasons than scenery to be interested in Dublin. To the Irish, Dublin itself, the place where the city stands, was simply Ath Clíath, the Ford of Hurdles, where the main road from Tara into Cualann (that is, Wicklow) crossed the Liffey. But Ben Edair, as they called Howth, was a place of great importance to them. Its name recurs constantly in the Ossianic poems as a favourite hunting-ground for Finn and his companions ; and in the *Colloquy of the Ancients* (the oldest collection of Ossianic stories), it is not only a place where Finn musters his battalions, but it is the regular port of

entry and departure for central Ireland. There the King of Thessaly's son lands to run a wager for the tribute of all Ireland ; and there we read that one of the Tuatha de Danann undertook to have a ship always in readiness to carry Finn's messengers or champions whatever road they might choose. Story tells, too, that the cromlech in Lord Howth's demesne covers Aideen, the wife of Oscar, who died of grief when Oscar fell with the rest of the Fianna at Gabhra. She has another monument in Ferguson's noble poem " Aideen's Grave " ; the verses there put into the mouth of Oscar's father, the ancient Ossian, are worthy to rank with what has been best written in the native Irish on these legendary themes.

But we come nearer to ascertained history when we touch the tradition which links Howth with the name of Crimhthann or Criffan. Where to-day the Bailey Lighthouse stands, on the south-east point of the peninsula, occupying the summit of a rock sheer to the seaward, and joined to the main hill only by a narrow passage of rock, was once a king's stronghold—Dún Criffan, a round fort secure on this jutting eyrie.[1] But these are far off and fugitive memories. It is not for nothing that the Danish name *Hovud* supplanted Ben Edair, just as in Dalkey

[1] There were two Crimthanns in the list of Irish Kings, and the lord of Dun Criffan is dated about A.D. 10. The other, a more historic personage, was a Milesian and preceded Niall of the Hostages. The name (softened into Crimhthann) survives as Griffin.

the Danish "ey" replaced the Irish "innis" of *Dealginnis*-Thorn Island. The Danes created that strong centre of life which grew, and in a very short period, to be the metropolis of Ireland. Irish historians have dwelt too much on their ravages and too little on the service which they rendered as founders of cities.

Their ravages, as I have noted already, were not wholly without excuse, though the terrible reprisals which they made struck Christendom in regions guiltless of any wrong to their race. The lands which lay nearest suffered first ; in 787 they were on the north-east coast of England pillaging Lindisfarne, a Northumbrian offshoot of Irish Christianity. Then, working round the north of Scotland and establishing themselves in the outer Isles, they felt their way towards Ireland. In 795 they burned Rechru or Rathlin, off Fair Head ; three years later they pushed further down the Channel and harried St. Patrick's Island with its small monastic colony off the Leinster coast. These earlier raids were directed against the outlying island settlements where the Saints of the Third Order had established anchoritic communities. In Inishmurray, off Mayo, on the Skelligs at the mouth of Dingle Bay, they plundered those hermits whose stone bee-hive cells are still there, a witness to the strange austerities of that pursuit of holiness. In 812 and 813 they pushed inland, entering Roscommon and Mayo : the seats of religion, their chief objects of

attack, were the more defenceless because a judgment given in 804 had exempted all clerics from the duty of bearing arms, which previously had been imposed on them. In 819 Howth was plundered, and also the little shrine on Ireland's Eye; in 824 the foreigners spoiled all Meath. It would be tedious to give the details of all their maraudings. But in 832 the mischief took a graver form. The Danish king whom Irish annalists name Turgesius organised plunder into a definite plan of conquest, and, striking first at the very seat of Irish Christianity, sailed up the Bann, established a fleet on Lough Neagh and seized Armagh, where he himself held court in the shrine of Patrick. Meanwhile another fleet, acting under his orders, was at Dundalk, and yet another on the Shannon. Posts were established by him at Dublin, at Limerick, and at Carlingford; and vessels which were worked up the Shannon to Lough Ree gave him a centre of power in the very heart of Ireland. Ota, his Queen, was established on the altar in Clonmacnoise, desecrating the great western centre of Christianity as Turgesius himself had polluted that in the North.

Who this man was is something of a problem, for the name is found only in Irish annals. But the conjecture of Mr. Halliday (from whose book, *The Danish Kingdom of Dublin*, most of my knowledge is derived) identifies him with Ragnar Lodbrog, who perished in Ireland in 845. This date is fixed from an Icelandic source, and Irish annals give the same year

as that in which Turgesius ended his ravages, defeated at last and drowned in Lough Owel near Mullingar by an Irish prince. Halliday's theory of the name makes Turgesius a Latinising of Thorgils, that is "the servant of Thor"; as if Ragnar, coming to Ireland and seeking to establish a pagan kingdom in the very shrines of Christian power, styled himself expressly "Thor's man."

At all events, to Turgesius, whoever he was, is due, I think, the foundation of Dublin. The foreigners built a castle there to command the Hurdle Ford on the rising ground where Dublin Castle stands to this day; and they occupied the territory about the bay and northward which still is known as the barony of Fingal. The Fionn-Gaill, or Fair-haired Foreigners, were the Norse, or Lochlannaigh, as distinguished from the black-haired Danar, or Dubh-Gall; and shortly after the death of Turgesius the settlement of the Fionn-Gaill at Dublin was sharply attacked by the Dubh-Gaill. Similar wars recurred till, in 852, Amlaf, son of the King of Lochlann, "came to Ireland and all foreign tribes submitted to him," and he "had rent from the Irish." This Amlaf was Olaf the White, son of Inguald, a descendant of Ragnar Lodbrog; and the main settlement of Danish (or rather Norse) power in Dublin may be dated from his advent. Certain things must be understood about it.

In the first place, the settlement was not wholly against the will of the Irish. Amlaf's successor, Ivar,

was closely allied to Cearbhall (Carrol), King of Leinster—so closely that, on Ivar's death, Cearbhall succeeded to headship of the Danish colony; and when Iceland was first settled from Norway, about 870, sons of Cearbhall's daughters were among the first settlers. By such alliances Ireland became almost a part of the great seafaring community which dwelt along the shores of the Baltic, and flung its outposts and its conquering expeditions far south and north; and the relation was not all one of loss for the Irish. For merchant voyages alternated with viking cruises, and these Danish strongholds were centres of commerce and of craftsmanship. The saga of Olaf Tryggsvi's son, tells how Thorer "went on a merchant voyage to Dublin as many were in the habit of doing"; and indeed it seems that almost every King of Norway visited this seat of an allied kingdom.

And, let it be understood again, the Danish kingdom of Dublin in the ninth century was not limited to Ireland. The men who ruled there governed a territory in England which stretched from the Humber to the Scotch border, and had York for its local capital. Naturally, such a kingdom tended to break apart, and I do not suppose that Cearbhall governed more than the Dyflynarskiri, or Danish kingdom in Ireland, which stretched from Arklow, in the south of county Wicklow, to Skerries, in the north of county Dublin. On Cearbhall's death, Flann, High King of Ireland, claimed to succeed him, but the

foreigners were too strong for Flann. Yet after the death of Godfrey, who died in 896, king both of Northumbria and Dublin, the Irish rose against the foreigners and drove them out of Dublin, first to Ireland's Eye (the craggy islet near Howth), and thence to Britain.

Thus the end of the ninth century saw an ebb in the Danish power: and Irish tradition speaks of forty years' repose. But events soon determined a new conquest of Dublin. The Irish were preoccupied as usual by internecine war: Flann the High King with allies invaded the territory of Cormac MacCullinan, King of Cashel: Cormac retaliated successfully; but in 908 a great battle, fought at Ballaghmoon, near Carlow, ended in desperate loss to the Munstermen, and the death of Cormac, king and scholar. While Ireland was thus weakening herself, the Norse were gaining strength yearly, and in 910 the cession of Normandy by the French King to the invaders liberated a host of fighting men. Seeking plunder wherever they could find it, they raided Scotland and Wales, and finally descended on Waterford. In Ulster the foreign settlements had still maintained themselves at Strangford and Carlingford (names which keep the memory of those settlers, ousting the Irish Lough Cuan and Snámh Eidheamh); and in 912 Sitric, the son of Godfrey, setting out from his Northumbrian kingdom, recovered Dublin, and sent a fleet to reinforce the descent upon Waterford.

The Irish did not submit tamely to this new

defeat. Niall Blackknee, High King, mustered an array on the slope of the Dublin hills, and encouraged his men with a prospect of spoiling the Norse of their armour :

"Whoever wishes for a speckled shield-boss and a sword of sore-inflicting wounds,
And a green javelin for wounding, let him go early in the morning to Ath Clíath."

But it fell out otherwise :

"Fierce and hard was the Wednesday
On which hosts were strewn under the feet of shields ;
It shall be called till Doomsday
The fatal morning of Ath Clíath."

So says a poem quoted by the Four Masters, and their prose account makes it clear that Niall had mustered Eastern Ireland from the Wicklow hills to Lough Neagh and Belfast. For besides Niall Blackknee himself and Conor, son of McLoughlin, heir to the throne of Ireland, there fell also Aedh, King of Ulidia, that is county Down ; the lords of Oriel, and of South Oriel, which together would include Armagh, Monaghan and Louth ; and the lords of Magh Breagh and South Breagh, which cover the country from the Boyne to Dublin and Bray. "The battle of Ath Clíath, that is of Cillmosamhog by the side of Ath Clíath," was fought on the 17th of October, 919 ; and no defeat so notable had yet been inflicted by the foreigners on the Irish, who indeed had never before offered anything so like a national resistance. In the grounds of Glen South

well, high up on the slope of Kilmashogue mountain, there stands a cromlech on a lawn of green turf and bracken ; and I see no reason to dispute the tradition that this marks the graves of those kings who fell on "the fatal morning of Ath Cliath." But in any case, over those green pastures, across the bright running little stream, up into the hollow of the glen, battle must have raged that day till the speckled bosses of the Danish shields and their swords of sore-inflicting wounds got the mastery at last.

But while the Danes were re-establishing their power in Dublin, Northumbria was slipping from them to Athelstane. In 926 Godfrey, Sitric's successor, vainly endeavoured to reassert that sovereignty : in 938 Amlaf Cuaran repeated the attempt, and was finally defeated at Brunanburg, whence, as the saga tells (in Tennyson's rendering), the Norsemen fled, a

> "Blood-reddened relic of
> Javelins over
> The jarring breaker, the deep sea billow,
> Shaping their way toward Dyflyn again,
> Shamed in their souls."

Thus ended the rule of Northern England from "Dyflyn." Amlaf Cuaran marks an epoch otherwise, for he became a Christian, and Irish annalists date the general conversion of the Danes at 948. Moreover, Amlaf brings us into touch with the hero of Clontarf, for he was the first husband of Gormflaith, the Kormlada of Icelandic saga. Gormflaith's

second husband was Maelseachlain, or Malachy, High King of Ireland, who parted from her; her third was Brian of the Tribute—and Brian also put her away. The Irish annalist relates that it was said of Gormflaith that "she took three leaps no woman should take—a leap at Dublin, a leap at Tara, and a leap of Cashel"—marrying, that is, three kings in succession, and each greater than the one before. But the Icelandic Nial-saga says curtly, yet not churlishly, that "she was the fairest of all women, and best gifted in everything that was not in her power, but she did all things ill over which she had any power."

Before I begin to sketch the events which brought Gormflaith and her three husbands as protagonists on the stage on that momentous day at Clontarf—Amlaf, indeed, not in person, yet represented by his son—some sketch must be given of the seat of that power which Brian finally curbed, after it had threatened to master all Ireland.

In the first place, physically, it is a little hard to realise the original Dublin—so much of the present city has been built up on land reclaimed from the sea. The germ of the city was a fortress over the ford, Ath Cliath—still marked by the Castle. *Dubh Linn*, the black pool, where the Danes beached their ships, was below this ford at the point where the Poddle stream falls into the Liffey—a watermark only distinguishable at low tide, for the Poddle is now merely a

covered sewer. A mile lower down, on the same bank, the Dodder flowed in, and the triangular point of low land, enclosed between the Dodder and the Liffey, was from Danish times, for centuries onward, known as the Steyne.

It has to be remembered that embankment and reclamation have altered a main feature ; and probably the unconfined tide did not go beyond the Hurdle Ford and the old bridge (west of the Four Courts). I picture to myself a clean bright salmon stream, with low banks, flowing gaily to a shallow somewhere opposite the Castle, and receiving below that a little affluent from under the rough walls—most likely of wood—which encircled the Danish stronghold. At this meeting of the waters would be a strong race and a pool, making a noble lodge for fresh run fish just up from the tide. The Danish boundary inland was marked (according to the Scandinavian usage) " as far as the salmon swims up stream," and the Leixlip fall made this terminus ; though undoubtedly in those days the " lax " (or salmon) was as well able to leap the barrier as he is to-day.

The Steyne, lying seaward from the fort, would be such an expanse of short-growing sward, with boggy patches here and there, as all fishermen are familiar with about the mouth of salmon rivers. This tongue of land was marked by a big standing stone and one or two raths—of which there is left no trace, for the bulk of that space is now covered by the College precinct and Westland Row Station. Probably, in

deed, the College grounds comprise most of all that was not sea and slob alternately. On the other side of the Steyne, tide-water came up almost to what is now Merrion Square. But between College Green and Stephen's Green, near the churchyard of St. Andrew's, there rose, in those days, a notable mound, some forty feet high—a natural tumulus. Here the Danes, after their custom, held assembly in the open; for this was the "Thingmote" of Dublin—only levelled in the seventeenth century when building space began to be of value. The sharp little rise from Dame Street to Suffolk Street indicates where it stood.

On the north bank of Liffey there was probably no town at all, but the whole of this country was grazed by the herds of the foreigners. Due west of Dublin, at Clondalkin, the Danes established a fort in the early days of their power, doubtless to guard against raids of the Irish. But they were oftener the attackers than the attacked.

It must not be supposed that their power was confined to Dublin, or even to the seaport towns. They left their impress far and wide through the country, and to-day if you ask what race made this or that old rath or subterranean dwelling the answer will be always "The ould Danes," or (if in Irish) *Na Lochlannaigh*. It is notable, too, that we use Danish forms of the names of three provinces, Ulster, Munster, and Leinster; the termination "stadr," meaning "place" or "region," is tacked on to the Gaelic form—Ula-ster, Muwan-ster, Leighean-ster. This

is probably due to the fact that the Norman-English, when they came, found intercourse much easier with those other Norsemen of the Danish kingdom than with the native Irish.

Two of the names which come to us from the Danish occupation help us to realise the organised power that ruled in Dublin. Wicklow and Arklow were points where a "lue," lowe, or beacon blaze was ordained to be kept alight as a guide to shipmen. But for anything like a full idea of the men who held so much power in the Ireland of that day—the men whose comrades and kin had won Normandy, and whose descendants were to conquer England—it is necessary to read the sagas: where you find them quarrelsome, bloody, treacherous, yet infinitely brave, and in a strange manner mingling respect for law with the greatest disregard for life. They were the terror of Europe; and it needs no other testimony than their own to show that the greatest defeat which befel them was inflicted by Irishmen at the very seat of their kingdom.

I have sketched in my last chapter the victory of Sollohed, Brian's rise to the sovereignty of Munster, and his subjugation of the Danes in southern Ireland. Not less conspicuous was the success that Malachy, King of Meath, won over the foreigners at Tara in 979. From the field he marched straight on Dublin, which he captured—probably as Brian captured Limerick, more by surprise than regular siege, for the Danish walls seem always to have defied assault if

adequately defended. After taking great booty Malachy issued proclamation, "Every one of the Gael who is in the territory of the foreigners in service and bondage, let him go to his own territory in peace and happiness." Thus, say the Four Masters, ended the Babylonian captivity of Ireland. Amlaf (or Olav) Cuaran fled from Dublin to a Christian penitence in Iona; and it is a fair conjecture that his wife Gormflaith was part of the prize of victory. At all events Malachy then, or at some other time, married her, and at some time put her away.

But the important fact is this: Malachy did for Leath Cuinn what Brian had done for Leath Mogha; and it is notable that the author of the *Wars of the Gael with the Gall* does no justice to this great victory. For the writer, whether MacLiag or another, was Brian's partisan and in no way inclined to rate highly Malachy's services to Ireland.

In the eighteen years which followed the battle of Tara, Malachy and Brian were intermittently at war. But at last in 998 they came to rational agreement, and, after a meeting on the Westmeath shore of Lough Ree, agreed that Malachy should be undisputed sovereign of Leath Cuinn and Brian of Leath Mogha; and that their united efforts should be directed against the Danes. Two years later this bore fruit; the men of Leinster inclined to rebel against Brian—who was doubtless levying unsparingly the tribute which had been originally due to Meath—and they leagued themselves with the Danes, always

more or less allied to Leinster. Brian, accompanied by Malachy (whose honour is again omitted by MacLiag), met them at the western base of the Wicklow hills, near Dunlavin, the seat of Leinster kings; and in the pass of Glenmama the Danes were utterly defeated. Maelmordha, son of the King of Leinster, was caught hiding in the branches of a yew tree, and was pulled out of it by Murrough, Brian's son, chief champion of the Dalcais. The enemy was pursued into Dublin, and "killed, destroyed, exterminated, enslaved, bondaged. So that there was not a winnowing sheet from Ben Edair" (that is Howth) "to Tech Duinn" (a rock off the Kenmare river in Kerry) "that had not a foreigner in bondage in it, nor was there a quern without a foreign woman."

Brian remained in Dublin "from Great Christmas to Little Christmas" (that is, to February 1st) of the millennial year 1000, and Sitric, king of the Danes, fled north, seeking asylum from the northern Hy Neill—Aedh, king of Ailech, between Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly, and Eochaidh, king of Ulaidh, that is, North-East Ulster. But Brian's messengers followed him, and shelter was refused, so that after quarter of a year he "came into Brian's house and submitted to Brian's own terms, and Brian restored his fortress to him." Brian did more. He gave his daughter to this Sitric, who was the son of Amlaf Cuaran by Gormflaith; and, probably as a means to strengthen the same bond, he himself married Gormflaith. Brian

was preparing for the blow which he struck two years later. In 1002 he marched "a great expedition of all Leath Mogha, both Gael and Gall," until they reached Tara of the Kings; there, Brian, with the host of southern Ireland and the Danes of Cork and Waterford behind him, demanded hostages of Malachy —claiming, that is, the High Kingship for himself.

In this claim he had nothing but force to justify him. Just as the sovereignty of Cashel alternated (in theory at least) between the Eoghanacht of Desmond and the Dalcassians of Thomond, so for centuries the title of Ard Righ had gone alternately to the Clan Colman, or southern descendants of Neill who ruled Meath, and to the Cinel Eoghain, or Hy Neill of Ailech and Ulaidh. Malachy demanded time for an appeal to Ireland against Brian's usurpation. He asked a month "to muster Leath Cuinn"; and Brian conceded it, remaining in Tara under pledge to do "no destruction nor trespass." I have noted already this proof that, though Tara had been abandoned in consequence of Ruadan's curse for more than four centuries, it retained its symbolic association of sovereignty.

Malachy sent northward his ambassador—a poet, not from his own court but of the north—who went to Aedh O'Neill at Ailech and incited him in a long poem to join Malachy and give battle to Brian. "'Tis a shame to have old Temhair dragged to the West," he cried, urging Aedh "to restore Leath Cuinn to its right," and "bring a wave of woe upon

Brian." But Aedh answered curtly that when the northern Hy Neill had Tara, they defended it themselves. Then Malachy came in person and was offered help only on condition that he would surrender half Meath to the northern branch; and in anger he returned home and rode to Brian's tent "without guarantee or protection beyond the honour of Brian himself and the Dalcais," and made his submission. Brian answered that since Malachy had come so boldly and frankly, a year's respite should be given. And accordingly in 1003 Brian met Malachy at Athlone and received his hostages, and on the same day took hostages from all Connacht. He claimed and took hostages from Ulster also; in 1004 he made his famous march through Ireland.

Starting from Kincora, his route was "through the middle of Connacht and into Magh Ai" (that is, Roscommon); "over the Curlew mountains" (near Boyle); "and into Tir Aillel" (that is county Sligo); "and into the country of Cairpre and beyond Sligo, and keeping his left hand to the sea and his right hand to the land, and to Ben Gulben, over the Duff and over the Drowes, and into Magh-h-Eine" (about Bundoran); "and over Ath Seanaigh at Assaroe" (Ballyshanny ford); "and into Tir Hugh" (that is, South Donegal); "and over Barnesmore Gap and over Fearsed" (the ford at Strabane); "and into Tyrone and into Dalriada" (the Route, in North Antrim); "and into Dalaraidhe" (the Slemish country); "and into Ulaidh" (county Down);

"until about Lammas he halted at Belach Duin"—which O'Donovan thinks is the Gap of the North above Dundalk. It must anyhow have been near the sea; for when Brian dismissed the men of Erin, "the Leinstermen went over Bregha" (the plain north of Dublin) "southward, and the foreigners *over the sea* to Ath Clíath and Port Lairge" (Waterford), "and to Limerick; and the Connacht men through Meath westwards to their homes."

It was in the course of this royal progress that Brian visited Armagh, as has been told; and from this journey the historians date the golden decade when—

> "From Tory to pleasant Cliodhna,
> And carrying with her a ring of gold
> In the time of Brian the white-skinned, the fearless,
> A lone woman made the circuit of Erin."

Brian was busy in those days building up civilisation, erecting churches, making bridges and causeways, strengthening fortifications in Cashel and other places. More notable still—and remember that this is quite probably a contemporary account—

"He sent professors and masters to teach wisdom and knowledge; and to buy books beyond the sea, because their writings and their books, in every church and in every sanctuary where they were, were plundered and thrown into the sea by the plunderers from the beginning to the end; and Brian himself gave the price of learning and the price of books to everyone separately who went on this service."

Trouble arose finally out of the very alliance through which Brian had so carefully built up his

power. The key of that alliance was Gormflaith, Brian's wife, mother of Sitric the Dane, and sister to Maelmordha, king of Leinster. The story tells how Maelmordha set out to convey three masts of pine of the trees of three districts of Leinster, as tribute to Kincora. But in a boggy place of the mountain the king himself put his hand to one mast, and in his exertions he burst a silver button off the gold-bordered silken tunic which Brian had given him—such a gift as monarchs made to their vassals.

"Now when they arrived at Cenn Coradh the King took off his tunic, and it was carried to his sister to put a silver button on it. The Queen took the tunic and cast it into the fire, and she began to reproach and incite her brother because she thought it ill that he should yield service or vassalage."

Such incitement was easily listened to among the Gael. Next morning an open quarrel broke out while Murrough, Brian's son, was playing chess; for Maelmordha stood by advising his opponent, and counselled a move which defeated Murrough. The Dalcassian was quick with a taunt: "It was you that advised the Danes at Glenmama when they were defeated." "I will give them advice again and they shall not be defeated," rejoined Maelmordha. "Have the yew tree made ready," was the fierce retort of Murrough, recalling his own triumph and Maelmordha's ignominy. The Leinster prince in anger "retired to his bedroom without permission, without taking leave" (note the hint of courtly ceremonial here). Brian, hearing of the dispute, foresaw

what would happen and sent messengers to detain Maelmordha "until he should carry away with him cattle and pay." But the messenger only "overtook him at the end of the plank-bridge of Cill Dálua on the east side, and he was mounting his horse there." Words arose, and Maelmordha "gave the messenger a stroke of a yew horse-switch, and broke all the bones of his head."

The detail of all this, with its interesting glimpse of life at Brian's court, seems certainly to suggest an author in Brian's household, and I believe in Mac-Liag. Who would have troubled to invent what is duly given—the stages in Maelmordha's journey northwards to the house of the king of East Liffey where the nobles of Leinster assembled, and were incited by him to rise against Brian?

Revolt broke quickly and was directed chiefly on Meath. The northern Hy Neill plundered Malachi's country and O'Rourke of Brefny did the same. Malachy retorted with a raid into Fingal, plundering up to Ben Edair; but Maelmordha with Sitric and his Danes cut off one of the ravaging parties, and the foreigners and the Leinstermen then raided as far as to Fore Fechin in Westmeath. Malachy appealed to Brian, not in vain. Up through Ossory and Leinster the host of Munster, led by Murrough, carried fire and sword into the very heart of the Wicklow mountains till they reached "the community of Caimhghen," St. Kevin's monastery at Glendalough. No one seems to have resisted, and

Murrough pushed on to Dublin and sat down at Kilmainham "on the green of Ath Clíath." There Brian with another army joined him. But though they were encamped "from the festival of Kiaran in harvest to great Christmas" they could make no impression on the defenders of Dublin, and lack of provisions drove them home.

But on both sides it was understood now that matters must be settled definitely, and Brian mustered a great expedition to take the field with the first of spring, about St. Patrick's Day. The Danes on their part were not idle. Gormflaith, now openly on their side and directing their preparations, sent her son Sitric to the Orkneys to get Earl Sigurd's assistance, which the Earl only promised on condition that Gormflaith's hand should be pledged to him in marriage, and the kingship of Ireland if he won. This was conceded. Then Sitric sailed to the Isle of Man where lay two vikings, Broder and Ospak. Broder made the same conditions, and Sitric made the same promise—thinking doubtless that after the fight there might not be so many claimants for Gormflaith. Broder had been a mass deacon but was now become "God's dastard," and like every renegade priest he had magic powers. But his brother Ospak (the Icelandic story tells) refused to fight against so good a king as Brian, and, eluding Broder's attempt to destroy him, sailed for Ireland, and was with Brian's forces on the great day.

It was a wonderful muster. I quote from Sir

George Dasent's preface to his famous version of *The Saga of Niall's Burning* a description of the auxiliaries who came over seas to Dublin.

"Along with the great Orkney Earl came a great gathering of his chiefs and followers, called to the war from every island on the Scottish main from Uist to Arran, beaten blades who had followed the descendant of Thorfinn the skull-splitter in many a roving cruise—half heathen, half Christian men, who trusted perhaps to the sign of the cross on land, and to Thor's holy hammer on ship-board. . . . Along with their island levies came many Icelanders of the best blood in the land. Flosi would have gone himself, but the Earl would have none of his company, as he had his pilgrimage to Rome to fulfil, but fifteen of the Burners went to the fray, and Thornstein, Hall of the Side's son, and Halldor, son of Gudmund the powerful, and many other northern champions of lesser note."

"On the side of Brian"—he goes on—"was arrayed the whole chivalry of Ireland, except those parts which owned the sway of Scandinavian conquerors." It is the pity of the world it was not so. On that day Brian got no help from Ulster, which province had never thoroughly recognised his sovereignty. From Connacht came perhaps O'Rourke's forces, certainly those of Hy Many. Malachy was there with the host of Meath, but what part Malachy took in the action is a question hard to settle. The brunt of the battle was borne by Brian's own Munster men and their allies the southern Danes. Leinster, of course, under Maelmordha, was with Sitric—a circumstance over which good Irishmen still distress themselves. One said to me once: "I may tell you a thing I would not tell everybody. The ——"

(naming his own sept) "were on the wrong side at Clontarf. But," he said with fine emphasis, "they were on the right side ever since." I suppose nowhere in Europe is the sense of historic continuity stronger than among us : and long may it be so.

The accounts of the battle vary in detail. *The War of the Gael with the Gall* recounts that "when the foreigners saw the conflagration in Fine Gall and the district of Edar they came against them in Magh-n-Elta." Other stories say that the Danes of purpose postponed the battle till Good Friday, since Broder had prophesied that if they fought on that day Brian would fall. But at all events the battle was fought on Good Friday, April 23rd, 1014. The Danish host was divided into the battalion of Danmarkian allies, headed by Broder and Sigurd ; the battalion of the Dublin Danes under Sitric ; and the battalion of Leinster, headed by Maelmordha. On Brian's side were, first and foremost, the Dalcais, led by Murrough and by Murrough's son Turlough. After them came the battalion of Desmond from Kerry and West Cork ; the men of the Decies and East Munster under their kings ; the battalion of Connaught led by O'Heyne and O'Kelly of Hy Many ; and "the ten great stewards of Brian with their foreign auxiliaries," for Danes fought for Brian no less than Irishmen fought against him. On the field also was Malachy with the host of Meath, and whatever part they played at first there is no doubt that when fortune had declared itself, they "destroyed

the Danes from the Tolka to the ford of Ath Cliath itself."

The little river Tolka which flows into the bay about a mile north of the Liffey is our one positive landmark for locating the fight, as we know that Turlough was drowned "at the weir of Clontarf." Behind this, by Artane and Killester, was wood; and probably the space of ground covered was not great, for it was a hand to hand encounter of footmen. Unluckily the Irish description of the battle is in the extreme bombastic manner, an attempt to render not facts but emotions. It seems that the Leinster men for Sitric and the host of Brefny for Brian were opposed, and fully occupied with each other; the people of Hy Many and Connacht proper dealt with the Danes of Dublin; but the true pith of the battle was the encounter between Dalcassian and Danmarkian.

Earl Sigurd had his banner made by his mother, who was a wise woman, and had told him "I ween it will bring victory to them before whom it is borne, but speedy death to him who bears it." The banner was made "with mickle hand-cunning and famous skill. It was made in raven's shape, and when the wind blew out the banner, then it was as though the raven flapped his wings." So the Orkney saga tells. Man after man bore it and fell, and at last Sigurd called to Thorstein. "Bear thy own devil thyself," answered Thorstein; and Sigurd took the banner and met his death, MacLiag says, by Murrough.

Murrough had raged through the battle, a sword in each hand, dealing slaughter till at last he met Sigurd, whom impenetrable armour protected. But Murrough struck with his right hand at the leather fastenings of the helmet behind Sigurd's neck and cut them so that the helmet fell back exposing the neck ; and a blow of the left-hand sword slipped in and shore Sigurd's head away. But Ebric, the son of the King of Lochlann, charged into the host of the Dalcais "dealing in all directions fierce barbarous strokes." Murrough turned on him and in the combat closed with the foreigner, and pulling his coat of mail over his head, stabbed him thrice with his own sword. But Ebric reached for his dirk and ripped Murrough open so that his bowels dropped out. The Dalcassian had strength left to take his slayer's head, and he lived himself till sunrise and received absolution, "having made his confession and his will." But Ebric's dirk put an end to the High Kingship for the Dalcassians, and undid the best of Brian's work.

Between Clontarf and the dún of Dublin all was then open plain, and the folk of Ath Clíath stood on the walls watching—Sitric himself among them ; and by him was his wife Brian's daughter. "Well do the foreigners reap the field," said Sitric, as he saw the play of Danish axes ; "many is the sheaf they throw from them." "At the end of the day it will be judged," said Brian's daughter. The day wore on, and towards afternoon the battle turned against the Danes and they made to fly. They had fought for the time of two tides, and it was flood

tide about sunrise when they joined battle. Now nearing sunset it was flood again: "And the tide had carried away their ships from them, so that they had not at the last any place to fly to but into the sea (for Malachy and the Meath host were between them and the head of the hurdle bridge).[1]

"Then it was Brian's daughter said: 'It appears to me that the foreigners have gained their inheritance.' 'What meanest thou, O woman?' said Olaf's son, Sitric. 'The foreigners are going into the sea, their natural inheritance,' said she. 'I wonder is it heat that is on them: but they tarry not to be milked if it is.' The son of Olaf became angered, and gave her a blow that broke her tooth out."

If it be true that the battle was visible from the walls, the fight must have raged from the Liffey across to the Tolka—about a mile distant. The Danish ships would have been drawn up all along the edge of Liffey, for they were habitually beached; a passage in one of the sagas shows that they would float in water where men would be only up to the armpits wading. The tide at Dublin has a considerable rise, so that the water might easily drown a man at flood where a ship would be grounded and even dry at the ebb. They fled presumably in wild panic promiscuously, for the story tells that young Turlough, Murrough's son, "went after the foreigners into the sea when the rushing tide struck him a blow

[1] This statement concerning the tide afforded basis for testing MacLiag's accuracy; and independent calculation was made to fix the time of high water on Good Friday in 1014. It was found to be 5.30 a.m.

against the weir of Clontarf [1] and so he was drowned" in grapple with at least one of the enemy. Probably the Danes, finding themselves cut off from the bridge and from their ships, were trying to escape northwards along the shore and plunged into the mouth of the Tolka river, which would then be deep with the rising flood.

One of the Danes at all events escaped northwards—the viking, Broder. For somewhere on the rising ground by Clontarf Brian, whose seventy-four years of age kept him from the fight, knelt on a cushion praying, and no one was with him but his own attendant "whose name was Latean, from whom are the O'Lateans (Laddens) still in Munster." Brian said fifty psalms and fifty prayers and fifty paternosters, and he asked then how the battalions were. Latean answered, "Mixed and closely compounded, each in the grasp of the other, and the noise as if seven battalions were cutting down a wood." Brian asked how Murrough's standard fared: and the boy answered, "It is standing, and many of the banners of the Dalcais are around it." "That is good news," said Brian, and he prayed again, three fifties of psalms and prayers and paternosters; and again he asked how the battalions were. And Latean answered that no man on earth could tell one side from the other, for the greater part were fallen, and

[1] This weir stood where are now Ballybough bridge and the vitriol works, according to Mr. J. H. Lloyd, and there is no better authority.

those who were alive were so spattered with blood that a father could not know his own son. And Brian asked for Murrough's standard, and was told it was still standing and had passed far westward through the battalions. Brian said: "The men of Erin shall be well while they see that standard." Then he went back to the praying as before; and again he asked. This time the attendant said the hosts were like a wood which had been cleared, leaving only its stately trees and immense oaks standing. And the few gallant heroes that were left were all wounded and pierced through and dismembered. "And the foreigners," he said, "are now defeated, and Murrough's standard has fallen."

"'That is sad news, on my word,' said Brian; 'the honour and valour of Erin fell when that standard fell, and Erin has fallen now indeed; and never shall there appear henceforth a champion comparable to that champion. And what avails if we are to survive this, or that I should obtain the sovereignty of the world after the fall of Murrough and Conaing and the other nobles of the Dalcais.'"

Latean urged him to fly, as a party of the foreigners were retreating in his direction. But Brian refused to move; for, said he, the fairy Aoibhill of the Grey Crag above Kincora had told him he would be killed that day. And he gave Latean his blessing and told him his will; how he was to be carried first to Swords, then to Duleek, then to Louth, where the Society of Patrick should meet him and bear his body to Armagh. While he still spoke, the foreigners were seen approaching.

"'Woe is me, what manner of people are they?' said Brian. 'A blue stark-naked people,' said the attendant. 'Alas!' said Brian, 'they are the foreigners of the armour, and it is not to do good to thee that they come.' While he was saying this he arose and stepped off the cushion and unsheathed his sword. Brodar passed him by and noticed him not. One of the three who were there and who had been in Brian's service said 'Cing, Cing'; said he, 'This is the king.' 'No, no,' but 'Prist, prist,' said Brodar. 'It is not he,' says he, 'but a noble priest.' 'By no means,' said the soldier, 'that is the great King Brian.' Brodar then turned around and appeared with a bright, gleaming, trusty battle-axe in his hand, with the handle set in the middle of it. When Brian saw him, he gazed at him and gave him a stroke with his sword, and cut off the left leg at the knee and his right leg at the foot. The foreigner dealt Brian a stroke which cleft his head utterly, and Brian killed the second man that was with Brodar, and they fell both mutually by each other."

The saga tells—more credibly—that Broder after his feat was captured by Brian's men and was put to death with horrible torture. But in the essential there is agreement; the sagas admit that Brian fell, but that the defeat was crushing and conclusive. Hrafn the Red escaped with tidings to Earl Flosi. "What hast thou to tell me of my men?" asked the earl. "They all fell there," answered Hrafn. All through Scandinavia portents were seen and recorded, for that battle was the most famous fought across the western sea, both for the host of men and the great tidings that happened there.[1] An epoch was marked

[1] Tradition tells that Brian's body was laid under a yew tree, and that the yew tree is still there. At all events, in the grounds of a house just north of Clontarf Church is a yew whose age can only be guessed by centuries: the most wonderful tree of its kind in these countries, according to expert testimony.

for Gall not less than for Gael. All hope and all fear of a Norse dominion in Ireland was gone: and gone also was the last prestige of Norse paganism. With the downfall of Earl Sigurd's banner and the death of Broder, there vanished the spirit which had prompted not merely plunder, but deliberate destruction of Christian strongholds. Sixteen years later the Danes began to build the church which was the original or germ of Christ Church Cathedral; and the first bishop of Dublin was a bishop of the Ostmen, not of the Irish. So strongly was this felt, that when the kingship of Dublin passed, as it did before 1050, to an Irish Prince—Diarmuid Maelnambo, whose wife was Brian's grand-daughter—the Irish clergy resented the position given by Diarmuid to what they considered a foreign See, and claimed Fingal as a part of the Irish diocese of Glendalough. This quarrel was never really reconciled: and when the Irish Church came to be disestablished, and boundaries had to be defined, it appeared that no limit had ever been fixed between the See of Dublin and Glendalough—which had been for long united in practice as they are now.

It is perhaps unnecessary to insist that the effect of Clontarf's battle was not to expel the foreigners, but to reduce them to a position of friendly colonists, separate in race, but allied in religion, and after no great lapse of time recognising the supremacy of an Irish King.[1] One fact may be given in illustration.

[1] The Danish stock survives among us. Sigerson and Kettle, for instance, are names familiar and honoured to-day in the city and county of Dublin.

A famous Irish MS. is called the Book of Leinster, in which O'Curry discovered a fragment of the *War of the Gael with the Gall* before the perfect copy (written by Michael O'Clery, one of the Four Masters) was unearthed at Brussels. This Book, a collection of historical tracts, poems, tales, and genealogies, was written (we learn by an inscription in it) under the direction of Firin, Bishop of Kildare, for Aedh MacCrimhthann (Griffin), who was tutor to Dermot MacMurrough, "Chief King of Leath Mogha." It was precisely this claim of Dermot's to be Chief King of southern Ireland which led to his banishment from Ireland; and the banishment is commemorated thus by a marginal note in the Book of Leinster:

"O Mary! It is a great deed that is done in Erin this day, the kalends of August. Dermod MacMurchadha, King of Leinster *and of the Danes*, was banished by the men of Ireland over the sea eastward. Och! Och! O Lord, what shall I do?"

Thus it appears that the fugitive king, who to support his own claim brought in the Normans, had regarded his title to the headship of Leath Mogha as covering the sovereignty of the Danes of Ireland.

The most painful part of the story of Clontarf begins after the battle. The host of Munster lay encamped on the green of Ath Clíath by Kilmainham for two days, waiting the arrival of Donough, Brian's surviving son (the child of Gormflaith), who had been sent northwards with a raiding party. He came in at last, bringing a spoil of cattle, and at the

sight the foreigners threatened to come out and dispute the possession, but thought better of their threats. Next day was spent in burying the dead—except the nobles, of whom thirty were taken home for burial—and in making sledges for the wounded. But on the night after the first day's march dissension broke out. The men of Desmond separated their camp from that of Thomond, and "their attention was fixed on the Dalcais—their small number and the great number of their wounded." Cian, prince of Desmond (son of that Molloy who murdered Brian's brother Mahon, and whom Brian slew), revived the claim for alternation of sovereignty, and, as head of the Eugenian stock, claimed hostages from Donough and the Dalcais. Donough answered that Desmond's allegiance to Mahon and Brian had not been in fulfilment of the hereditary compact, but enforced because the Dalcais had won back Munster from the foreigners. Then the Desmond force threatened Thomond, and the Dalcais thought to put their wounded into a camp at the Rath of Mullaghmast. But the wounded men stuffed their wounds with moss and took their swords and advised immediate battle. Their grim looks scared the men of Desmond, and moreover the Kerrymen were at variance with the rest of South Munster, and so the Dalcais remained unfought. But they had still to traverse much of Leinster, and in Ossory, which Brian had plundered, MacGillaPatrick and his men demanded hostages from the weakened clan. Then the wounded men,—

whose wounds had been washed in the Barrow—sent to the nearest wood for stakes to drive into the ground, and tied themselves to them, and so made ready for battle, standing. And again their fierce countenance overawed their opponents, and the opponents "avoided the Dalcais." But thrice fifty of the wounded died of the excitement, and were buried where they had stood; and the remnant of the Dalcais came home to Kincora. So ends the story of the war of the Gael and the Gall, with an incident whose splendour only calls attention to the sad truth —that despite Brian's efforts Ireland was yet far removed from any conception of herself as a nation. The clan was still the unit, and Irishmen, Dalcais or other, fought not for the nation, but for the clan.

The one other great incident—another turning point in Irish history—with which Clontarf is associated, belongs to a day when the conception of Ireland as a nation was insisted on as hardly ever before, and hardly ever since. I have told of the vast meeting on the hill of Tara, in August, 1843, when half a million Irishmen—at the lowest estimate —assembled in an orderly multitude to back O'Connell's demand for Repeal of the Union. Then followed meetings up and down through Ireland, each with its muster counted by hundreds of thousands. At the provincial meeting of Leinster, held at the Rath of Mullaghmast—an old seat of the provincial kings—O'Connell was invested with the

national cap, shaped to represent the old Milesian crown. The great series of demonstrations was to close with one last and greatest meeting at the focal centre of Ireland, and on the field of Ireland's noblest victory.

But in the meanwhile Sir Robert Peel's Government was not idle. Thirty-five thousand troops were distributed through the country; fortifications and barracks were put in a state of defence. Little wonder, for O'Connell's famous speech at Mallow earlier in the year had threatened armed resistance. The Clontarf meeting was fixed for Sunday, October 8th; days passed on and preparations multiplied, the Government did nothing; but on Friday night, the 6th, newspapers rumoured that the meeting would be proclaimed. Only at half-past three o'clock on the Saturday was the proclamation actually brought into the room where the Repeal Committee were sitting. O'Connell took it and glanced at it. "This must be obeyed," he said. Then, turning to the secretary, "Write what I dictate." An appeal to the people was improvised, and sent to the printers; workmen were despatched to pull down the platform; riders galloped in all directions to meet the vast crowds who from the four quarters of Ireland were thronging the roads to Dublin. By dawn the appeal was posted in every village for twenty miles round, and the people, sullen but obedient, turned back to their homes. The Sunday found nothing but a regiment of rifles and a regiment of dragoons on the appointed

place of meeting ; two more regiments with a brigade of artillery posted on the rising ground above ; three ships of war anchored in the bay, and the guns of the Pigeon House trained on Clontarf ; the Lord Lieutenant riding about to view the scene ; and Tom Steele, O'Connell's "Head Pacificator," in a green uniform hunting home any few stragglers who showed signs of assembling.

It was O'Connell's great and dramatic collapse. He had carried Catholic emancipation fourteen years earlier by the threat of civil war. He had reckoned to carry Repeal by the same method. He had failed and the result was, as Gavan Duffy puts it, that his party "incurred the hatred of England by threatening resistance, and the contempt of England by failing to perform what they threatened." What is more, from that day he forfeited the confidence of the younger men, leaders of what became known as the Young Ireland movement.

It is one of the tragic mistakes of Irish history. Had O'Connell consistently maintained his *rôle* as the constitutional agitator he might have kept Ireland together. But at Mallow he preached armed resistance, then by his series of monster meetings—each a tremendous display of physical force—he strung the people up to the point of rebellion, and when the decision came to be taken, he did not rebel. Probably he never meant to rebel. Except in Parnell's day the nationalists of Ireland have never been united as they were in 1843, and they were then more numerous

by at least three million, still flushed with the pride of their victory in 1829, and their strength unsapped by the famine. Not to threaten would have been probably wiser than to rebel. But to threaten and not to rebel was a kind of national suicide.

In a word, Clontarf was the theatre of a great national triumph, now nine hundred years ago. But within living memory it was the scene of a national discomfiture whose consequences in a thousand pernicious forms are with us yet.

CHAPTER XI

CASHEL OF THE KINGS

I COULD count upon my fingers those among my acquaintance who have made pilgrimage to Cashel; and yet in all Ireland there is hardly anything so impressive and so interesting as this acropolis of Munster. Whether you consider its picturesqueness to the eye or its value as a monument in the history of Irish civilisation, Cashel stands without a rival among all our ancient groups of building; and, for the mere beauty of the prospect from the famous Rock, it is worth a day's journey. But its peculiar significance is, I think, that which this chapter is written to draw out: that at Cashel you have the most complete and unmistakable demonstration of the point to which Irish culture had attained before the Norman conquest, in the one decorated building or that earlier epoch which comes down to us intact; and also the most striking illustration of the manner in which Norman-Irish life grew into and out of the old pre-Norman civilisation. Cashel carries the mind back into remote ages of Munster kingship, and down

CORMAC'S CHAPEL AND THE ROCK OF CASHEL.

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through the great days of Irish Christianity ; carries it forward then through the centuries of alien yet assimilated dominion under rulers part Norman, part Irish ; and brings it finally to the abrupt close—the stop and deliberate smashing, under a new and wholly alien order, of all that linked Ireland with her venerable past.

What, then, is Cashel ? A kind of natural citadel in the first place, commanding one of the richest districts in Ireland. Picture a rock, some three hundred feet high, with a couple of acres of surface on its flat top approached by the steepest ascents ; and this rock dropped down among the pastures at the north of the Golden Vale. As soon as men conceived the idea of fortification at all, it was inevitable that the strongest of them should possess themselves of this vantage-ground and secure their possession by encircling the summit with a girdle of roughly piled wall. Any fort so enclosed was a cashel ; but this was the Cashel *par excellence*, and as early as we have any history Kings of Munster ruled here.[1] I have told already how, when Oliol Olum made his famous arrangement to alternate the sovereignty of Leath Mogh, Cashel was excluded alike from the Eugenian or Dalcassian inheritance, and belonged to the king who was recognised as ruler of the southern half of Ireland. When

[1] Vague tradition tells how before any king annexed it the place was looked on as a dwelling of the immortals—*Sidhe Druim*, the Fairy Ridge, in whose recesses lived people of the Tuatha de Danann.

Ulster, and I infer that the Dalcassian princes had their stronghold elsewhere. Gradually, however, the centre of power seems to have gravitated towards Limerick. It was outside Limerick that Turlough set up the head of his enemy, Donough O'Rourke, surnamed the Cock; and to Limerick Murtough O'Brien, Turlough's successor, brought back the very stones of Aileach, the northern Hy Neill palace, after he had demolished it in revenge for Donald McLoughlin's destruction of Kincora. This happened in 1101; and in the same year (say the Four Masters):

"A meeting of Leath Mogh was held at Cashel by Muircheartach O'Briain with the chiefs of the laity, and O'Dunan, both bishop and chief senior, with the chiefs of the clergy; and on this occasion Muircheartach O'Briain made a grant such as no king had ever made before, namely, he granted Caiseal of the kings to the religious, without any claim of laymen or clergymen upon it but the religious of Ireland in general."

Thenceforward there began to be Archbishops of Cashel, as there had for long been Archbishops of Armagh. It was the answer of Leath Mogh to the claim of Leath Cuinn regarding spiritual supremacy. There was no denying that Armagh was in the northern half of Ireland, and that a special ascendency attached to the See of Patrick. So long as the High Kingship was an appanage of the Hy Neill, whose kingdoms, whether of Ulster or of Meath, fell within Leath Cuinn, no one contested this predominance. But when Brian, King of Leath Mogh, established

himself as supreme in Ireland, and his successors (with varying fortune but unbroken persistence) maintained their claim to the same supremacy, southern bishops began also to seek a special eminence for the See of Emly in which Cashel was situated. Celsus, Archbishop of Armagh in the end of the eleventh century, was friendly to the King of Munster, and friendly also to O'Dunan, then Bishop of Emly. He consented, therefore, to the establishment of a second metropolitan See subject to his own primacy ; and it was doubtless a part of this bargain that King Murtough should provide the new Archbishopric with a home of suitable splendour. So from 1101 onwards there were Archbishops of Cashel, though as yet without special recognition from the Pope.

The last days of Murtough O'Brien were embittered by numerous defeats and by the rising power of the O'Conors in Connaught. When he died in 1119, the sovereignty of Munster was divided in many hands, and Cashel with the Eugenian kingdom of Desmond fell to Cormac MacCarthy. Turlough O'Conor was able so far to defy Conor O'Brien, the nominal King of Munster, that he invaded Ormond and forced Cormac MacCarthy to fly into the monastery at Lismore, in which retreat Cormac stayed three years before O'Brien restored him to the sovereignty of Cashel. Yet the service was ill-requited ; Eugenian and Dalcassian seldom bore each other a lasting friendship, and Cormac intrigued

again and again against the Dalcais, till finally an O'Brien murdered him on the Rock of Cashel, which he had beautified exceedingly. For Cormac had begun to build the chapel which bears his name after his restoration to the throne in 1127; it was finished in 1134, four years before he was murdered, and twenty years before the famous Bull of Adrian IV. granted Ireland to Henry II., to be his, with the Pope's blessing, whenever he should find himself at liberty to conquer it.

But before we consider what the Rock looked like when Cormac was done with his building, it is necessary to describe it as it stands at the present day. Mr. Thomson's drawings relieve me of most of the labour; let me try to supplement them, first of all with a little geography.

Cashel was the first and earliest of my journeys undertaken for this book—a Bank Holiday trip in August—and a glorious day of summer we had for it. Quite early we went out from Kingsbridge, along the line which for some distance strikes due west through Moy Liffey. Kingsbridge Station itself stands in what was once the Green of Ath Cliath at Kilmainham, where Brian's armies encamped; and in a general way we followed the route which Dalcassians must have marched over a hundred times. Yet it is probable that Munster armies on their way south would not go so far westward as does the railway, but would swing at once to the left, skirting the mass

of the Wicklow Hills. Splendid that range was as we saw it ; the eye was chiefly caught by Killikee, so richly wooded, with the Hunter's Lodge or Hell Fire Club, discernible to good sight, on top of it, and

Cashel from the North.

the wide valley of Borna Brina leading away up to Kippure, the highest summit. As we held westward to Newbridge, the mountains receded in long masses, vaporous and cloud-like, stretching far south through Leinster. All about us was a green country, too green ; one missed the warmer colour of harvest,

and the loss was only emphasised when we chanced on the rare beauty of a cornfield, and men cutting it under that August day of sun and shifting cloud. But the land was diversified with trees—a rich country full of prosperous demesnes. No wonder; it looked beautiful enough in the soft air and under the soft blue of sky, the soft grey and pigeon tints of the sun-fringed clouds. Yet I could not but think over Ferguson's lines, written concerning this rich plain where so often

> "The merry music of the chase
> Floats up the festive borders of Kildare."

Moy Liffey, with its "brown-clear river running through," still lacks, I fear, for those who live most pleasantly in it, a charm that it ought to have. We have not advanced much since Ferguson thus apostrophised it:

> "Yet thou for them, alas! nor History hast,
> Nor even Tradition; and the man aspires
> To link his present with his country's past,
> And live anew in knowledge of his sires,
>
> No rootless colonist of alien birth,
> Proud but of patient lungs and pliant limb,
> A stranger in the land that gave him birth—
> The land a stranger to itself and him."

Well—maybe it will not be so for ever; the spirit of Ferguson, himself a colonist, may spread through all the Irish of his race and creed.—We crossed the Liffey near Naas, a great stronghold of the Leinster kings; and I think that in old days the

main road led south through Naas to the ford of the Barrow at Athy. But the line still runs west, past the skirts of the famous Curragh where

> "Slim-bright steeds extending in the race
> Are yonder seen, and camping legions there."

The 'slim-bright steeds' are generally to be seen exercising near the railway, and as for the 'camping legions,' there are the lines of the Curragh two or three miles off across the wide expanse, which is cavalry ground and racecourse together. The resident gentry of Kildare and the other counties may speak of themselves as "the garrison," but the actual operative garrison has its quarters up yonder, in a town of mean impermanent huts—behind which loom up the ever durable unchanging hills. Yonder, representing the power which for centuries in Ireland has divided in order to govern, is the factor which has prevented the fusion of the self-styled "garrison" with the general mass of Ireland. That, yonder, is what has made possible the ascendency of a minority—with the consequences, moral and physical, both to the minority and the majority, that we are all so unhappily aware of.

At Kildare you have a glimpse of what would be well worth visiting as a preliminary to Cashel—a Gothic cathedral, so planned as to be also a fortress—the religious architecture of builders whose training was all military. A few miles further, at Monasterevan, the line crosses the Barrow—here a smallish slow-

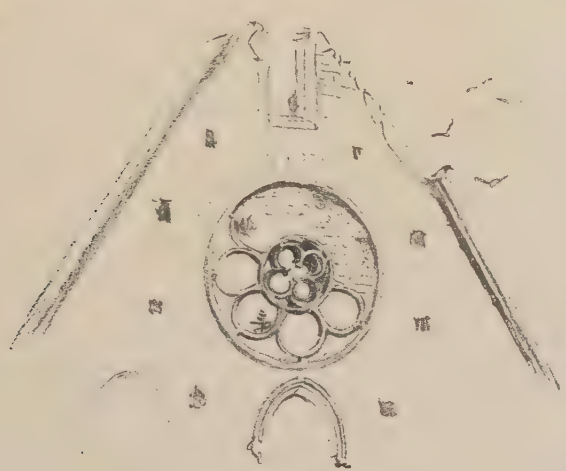
running river, which nevertheless is of great significance as a landmark. The Liffey drains Moy Liffey eastward into Dublin Bay, north of the mountains of Leinster. But the Barrow and its affluent

Round Tower and Gable of Cathedral on Cashel Rock.

the Nore draw with them all the waters of Offaly, Leix and Ossory, to disgorge them a hundred miles south, in the upper limb of Port Lairge—the Waterford estuary.

At Portarlington the train at last heads southward : and now you have on your left the low chain of

rocky hills dividing the valley of the Barrow from that of the Nore—while on your right you begin to see outlines of the Slieve Bloom range which separates central Leinster from the Shannon watershed. Beyond Maryborough and Ballybrophy another line of hills takes up the business of dividing Ireland, and these are easily recognised if only by their name. No



Rose Window, Cathedral on Cashel Rock.

one can mistake the Devil's Bit—a great gap in the top of this steep ridge. And when you see that, you cannot be far from Cashel, for the story is that what the Devil took out here he dropped ten or fifteen miles south-east in the middle of the fields, and it is now the Rock of pious memory. You will see also on your left and in front of you the magnificent outline of the great Galtees, and to the left of them

again the Comeragh hills, shepherding the Suir eastward. For by this time you have struck another river basin, westernmost of the four—Slaney, Barrow, Nore and Suir—which drain the rich central part of Ireland from north to south in courses roughly parallel to each other, until the Suir, encountering this great barrier of the Galtees, curves back on itself and then heads away east.

But let us consider the historical geography from the Rock itself—the finest vantage point in Ireland for this kind of study. A little branch takes you off the main line of rail, and very soon on your left you see high up in air this incredible pile of buildings—golden-grey in the sunlight. The station brings you to the south-west of the Rock, where the slope is most gradual and the buildings do not overhang so stupendously as on the east, whence Mr. Thomson has drawn them. Yet even so it is very amazing. You toil up, seeing not much except the cathedral which covers three-fourths of the whole space, and beyond it the round tower rising stately and slender. Cormac's chapel is hidden from view. But on such a day as we had for our sight of it, the landscape attracts before the ruins. Once you are in the enclosure, admitted through a gate in some small castellated buildings (once the residence of vicars-choral), the entrance to the cathedral is before you and a huge fragment of solid masonry lying fallen beside it. But you will turn your back on the cathedral to look at the Galtees. Right across from south-

east to south-west this chain raises its line of bold peaks some three thousand feet high—all the more imposing because they rise from so rich and so fertile a "sweet-flowery plain." Stretching from you, all one expanse of green only diversified by trees, is the Golden Vale, which runs straight south-west to Mallow thirty miles off. The Galtees border it on the left; on the right are the low Slieve Phelim hills with Limerick and the Shannon beyond them. Slieve Phelim is in Thomond, and Thomond extended to the very wall of Cashel. But to the south are the Decies, on both slopes of the Comeragh hills, which continue the Galtees eastward. Separated from these, the domed bulk of Slievenamon (*Sliabh na mBan*, the Women's Mountain) blocks off Cashel from Southern Ossory and the valley of the Nore; in the gap between it and the Comeraghs the Suir escapes seaward past Clonmel. North of the Rock —you should mount the tower if only for an embracing view—the Devil's Bit shows plain and indicates the direction of Ormond; east of that, all is Leix and Ossory. You stand here at a meeting-point of ancient principalities.

Yet that day, under a glorious sunshine, one thought little enough of anything but mere beauty. The view was waterless—though one felt or guessed at the Suir's presence all through that lush-growing plain; but save for the lack of sea or lake or river, there is no view known to me to rival it. Mountains everywhere, undulating here, there cragged and

menacing ; cloud-shadows sweeping over them and off them on to such wide expanses of earth so fertile ; purples and greys and browns, greens innumerable, under that deep sky—it was a glory of colour. And as one lay there basking at the foot of ancient walls, the mind had sense of a meaning and a purpose in the landscape—as if all this were somehow part of the ancient life, contributory to the building of that strong and stately citadel, now so lamentable and so desolate, yet enduring still to testify beyond all power of dispute to bygone greatness.

A strange thing about these ruins is that ruin has overtaken only what is of more recent date. There can be little doubt that the round tower, which is perfect, dates from some time not long after King Murtough's grant of the royal residence to "the religious of Ireland." Except in ecclesiastical centres these belfries were not erected, and it is probably older than Cormac's work, though only by some decades. His chapel, also dating from the early part of the twelfth century is, externally, much as he left it. But the cathedral is a ruin, and it was evidently built after both chapel and tower. An earlier church may have stood where is now the choir, but the great building which now stands roofless was certainly planned to fill up the space between the round tower, which is at the east angle of the north transept, and Cormac's chapel, which lies along the south side of the choir, included in the angle formed by the south transept.

The cathedral so planned is cruciform but has the cross inverted. Cormac's building determined the position of the transept, about half-way along the whole length available on the Rock ; thus the nave could not be more than equal in length to the present choir. But, moreover, a goodly cantel had to be cut off for purposes other than those of religion, and the western end of the cathedral is simply a castle, with defences commanding the great door. Entrance to it was had only by narrow stone stairs leading up in the thickness of the wall from the church itself. Thus the nave was shortened to half the length of the choir ; traces can be seen of corbels which carried a gallery to increase its number of seats.

It would be tedious to dwell on the detail of what can be seen in the cathedral, but one may note the decorative ideas. The choir is lit from the north side so far as it runs parallel with Cormac's chapel ; beyond that, windows are only on the south side so as to grade the light ; and there is one small window in a space on the south wall curiously curved so as to throw light under the central arch of the tower which sprang from the meeting of the transepts. It is said that the cathedral was originally built by Donal O'Brien, King of Thomond, in 1169. If so, the transition from Cormac's chapel—planned some forty years earlier—is most notable, both in point of size and of construction. Yet to achieve the smaller building was perhaps technically the more

King Cormac's Doorway.

difficult feat, and its ornament is by far more interesting than that of the greater church.

Cormac's chapel is now entered from the cathedral

by a doorway evidently of a later day, but its original main entrance was the superb northern portal which Mr. Thomson has drawn. The drawing shows how this early Irish architecture in adopting the arch had never wholly departed from the decorative ideas connected with flat lintels or angular headings ; and it will be seen how finely the artist combined the idea of the entablature with the principle of the arch.

Inside, what strikes one first is the smallness of the building ; nave, chancel, and apse, are all in miniature. Why the chancel arch is set to one side no one professes to explain, but so it is, and the effect is bizarre enough. What remains in my mind is the general air of massive richness produced by a profusion of heavy stone mouldings of the type generally known as Norman. The walls are arcaded with round arches, and the surface of the enclosed panels is chiselled with tracery in low relief. Dark as the place is, the gloom only lends to the general richness, and there are traces of colour on the walls which must have completed the splendour.

Outside, the most striking feature is again the decorative effect of arcading the walls, and carrying string courses round the queer unsymmetrical towers. But from an architect's point of view the stone roof, so steep and so heavy, set on so narrow a building, is the interest of the whole. It is doubly supported ; the nave has a barrel-vaulted roof, the chancel has one of groined semicircular arches. Above that

again springs an inner roof of stone, making a high-pointed arch, on which the exterior roofing rests. From the tower you can enter the space left between these two roofs, which is now only one apartment, but once, as widows and corbels show, had two stories, separately lit and divided by a wooden floor. One of these places was doubtless a *scriptorium* or studio for copying and illuminating manuscripts ; and somehow that queer chilly garret seemed to bring me nearer to the actual human life of the old place than I got elsewhere.

Cormac's chapel represents the final development of building carried out by Irish workmen and designers on purely Irish lines. If it was completed in 1134, ten years did not elapse before the Cistercian colony at Mellifont brought in the Continental style of architecture ; and the leap in forty years to the development shown by the cathedral is not impossible. The craftsmen who built Cormac's chapel could build anything under competent direction: and there is no doubt that the ideas introduced at Mellifont would tend to spread rapidly.

These new ideas represent a much needed quickening of the national mind. Cormac's work, fine as it is, speaks of a race which had drifted into a backwater—for let it be remembered, by 1130 York Minster was already built. The quickening influence was the Church. St. Malachy's journey to Clairvaux was answerable for the construction of Mellifont: and Christian, chief of the clerics whom he left to be

trained at Clairvaux, was afterwards Bishop of Lismore, and would naturally be a potent influence in spreading the example of this new work through Munster. If King Donal was really able in 1169 to have such a building planned and carried out, as was the cathedral whose walls stand on the Rock to-day, the clerics were to be thanked for it; for through the Church Ireland was being drawn out of her backwater into the general stream of European life and thought. Politically, she was in a state of arrested development, unable to rise out of her welter of principalities into any coherent organisation; and there is good reason for believing that King Donal did not build the cathedral as we know it, because it contains a military and political idea, alien to his stage of civilisation. The west end of it was a castle, and no Irish king had as yet perceived the possibility or the necessity of consolidating power by means of strong and costly military buildings. That lesson had to be learnt from the Normans, and cruelly they enforced it.

It is not enough to say that Ireland was in a state of arrested development. She had fallen back. The proof of it lay in all men's memories, for no one had forgotten how, under Brian, Ireland had been organised and had been strong; and the century and a half which had elapsed since Brian's death had gone far to prove that Irish clans could not be welded into a system by any political means. Yet at the same time the Irish Church was being drawn closer and closer

to the vast European organisation. In 1152 her archbishops for the first time received the pallium from Rome ; and there is no doubt that one motive which prompted the desire for some great political change was a consciousness of grave disorder in the ecclesiastical system of Ireland. All these things have to be remembered when we consider the most important thing that ever happened at Cashel.

In 1172 Henry landed at Waterford and, having received the submission of MacCarthy, king of Desmond, marched to Lismore. Thence he crossed the Galtees, and advancing to the Rock of Cashel, was received on a friendly footing by Archbishop O'Lonergan—the first fully recognised archbishop of that metropolitan see. To the ancient capital of Leath Mogh,—where by a king's dispensation the spiritual not the temporal power now held sway—Irish princes flocked with surprising rapidity. MacGillaPatrick of Ossory and O'Fallon of the Decies came first : then no less a man than Donal O'Brien, king of Thomond, submitted and even surrendered Limerick to the new sovereign.

Henry, thus accepted with at least lip-homage by the chiefs, proceeded to regularise his position with the clergy. Under his auspices a synod was called at Cashel : the Bishop of Lismore, holding a commission from the Pope, presided ; and notable decrees were passed regulating matters of ecclesiastical discipline and general morality. More than that : it is affirmed (and denied) that Henry received a sealed

charter from every archbishop and bishop in Ireland conferring the kingdom of the country on him and on his heirs. There is at least nothing improbable in this, for Henry came to Ireland buttressing his claim with the moral support of Adrian's Bull. And for that Bull every bishop, and for that matter every educated man in Ireland, could give this justification : that under the existing political system there seemed no hope of a settled polity, and —which concerned Churchmen more closely—that the general disorder was spreading into the Church.

So much as this is clear. When Henry came to Ireland he came ostentatiously as a friend of the Church. The civilisation which he represented in its military aspect had already in its civil aspect been brought into Ireland by the Cistercians. And under the Normans ecclesiastical establishments flourished exceedingly—as Cashel can show.

On the south side of the Rock are ruins of school buildings, and it is probable that the school was conducted by Benedictines, who were the first order to be settled here. But many others came to cluster about this centre. A Dominican Priory was founded in 1243, a Franciscan Monastery in 1250, and their ruins can still be seen in the town, with some beautiful remains of stone-work. But the most striking ruins, outside the ring-fence of the Rock, are those of Hore Abbey, in a meadow to the west. The exquisite groined roof under its tower is a good example of what Irish builders had learned to do under the new

methods—carried out here as elsewhere by the Cistercians.

This monastery was built for them by Archbishop MacCearbhall who, having dreamed that the Benedictines plotted his death, proceeded to eject them and install the Cistercians in possession of their revenues. It is likely there was more than a dream to cause this proceeding, and this was not the only time, as we shall see, when the white monks played cuckoo to the black. And perhaps the ordinary reader may be the better of some notes on the history of these great orders.

The Benedictines were the first regular monastic communities in Europe. Before them monks lived together as in Ireland, but only in chance collections of individuals attracted by some reputed sanctity. Benedict first organised a rule. Yet in his order the monastery indeed was disciplined, but there was no discipline among monasteries. To extend the principle of discipline and uniformity was the object of the monks of Citeaux, who only separated themselves from a Benedictine monastery in 1098. In 1113 St. Bernard joined them, and they found their influence suddenly spreading broadcast through the might of a great man.

St. Malachy O'Morgair was born at Armagh in 1093, and was probably little younger than St. Bernard. He was at Lismore during the three years (1124–7) of Cormac MacCarthy's enforced retreat there, and it may have been he who infected Cormac

with the zeal for building, since it is specially recorded that he "strove to make churches like those he had seen in other countries," adorning them, said his enemies, "with proud and unnecessary work." Yet Cormac's building stands for an order of ideas wholly distinct from those which the Cistercians embodied in their forty-two Irish monasteries—of which Mellifont, the earliest, dates from 1142, and the latest was St. Mary's, built on the Rock of Cashel about 1260.

In 1421 the buildings were modified, when Richard O'Heidin, the archbishop, "repaired" Donal O'Brien's edifice. They took their final shape, I imagine, after 1485, when the great Earl of Kildare burnt the cathedral, and apologised for doing so by saying that he would never have committed such a sacrilege but that he thought the archbishop was inside. Unfortunately a day was coming when churches and archbishops both were exposed to a different danger. Kildare might burn and destroy in pursuit of a private feud, but the Geraldines were builders of churches for the clergy and the people of Ireland. Things went very differently in the reign of Elizabeth, when active persecution of Catholics had succeeded to the mere confiscation of Catholic property.

In the fiercest of this persecution, Dermot O'Hurley, a distinguished Irishman, who had taught law at Louvain, was made Archbishop of Cashel. For two years he carried on his duty under the screen of a

secular habit; but at last, while he chanced to be staying with Thomas Fleming, an Anglo-Irish Baron, at Slane, "a grave question was started at dinner in the presence of the squint-eyed Robert Dillon, one of the Queen's judges. The heretics, giving each his own opinion, freely proceeded to such extreme folly" that Dermot could no longer keep silence, but confuted them with such wealth of argument that Dillon's suspicions were roused, and O'Hurley was arrested while staying with the Black Earl of Ormond—who was at least nominally a Protestant. The bishop was brought to Dublin and first was offered bribes to accept the archbishopric under the Queen's authority. He refused; the Chancellor and Treasurer proceeded to argue, when he, "not relishing this," says his contemporary, Don Philip O'Sullivan, "especially as he was not allowed to reply to their nonsense, bade them, stupid and ignorant men (such was his high spirit), not to offer ridiculous and false doctrines to him, an archbishop and doctor of celebrated academies." Failing argument, Loftus and Wallop had recourse to torture, whose revolting details I need not set forth; and finally (on a rumour of Lord Ormonde's coming to Dublin) they hanged this indomitable and very human martyr.

His successor in the archbishopric was, I fancy, Miler Magrath, whose epitaph, in neat elegiacs, can be found in the cathedral. This Miler (that is, Maolmhuire, votary of Mary) was consecrated a priest and "set out from Rome to Ireland as if he

were going to denounce the new dogmatic errors of the English." Yet Philip O'Sullivan thinks that he had other intentions, and that he purposely paraded his apostolic letters in order to be arrested. Being brought before Elizabeth and her council he "deserted with little unwillingness the Catholic religion, readily embracing the Queen's sect and bribes." Made Archbishop of Cashel, he gave evidence of his Protestantism by marrying, not once only but twice—his first wife, a convert like himself, having fretted herself to death lest her marriage might after all have been unsanctified.

Yet it is not against Miler Magrath that I desire to rouse a retrospective indignation. His conversion may have been sincere, though tradition is against this view; and Don Philip O'Sullivan wrote that "he does not hunt priests nor endeavour to detach Catholics from the true religion,"—otherwise, let it be hoped, than by legitimate example and argument. His handsome monument shows that the church was in his day still cherished as an edifice; and though it must have been badly wrecked in 1647, when Murrough of the Burnings (then a soldier of the Parliament) stormed the place with much slaughter, even in the eighteenth century, the strong building held together and the chancel was in a state to keep out weather. It was used as a Protestant cathedral until the time of Archbishop Price, who succeeded to the see in 1744. This was a divine who liked things handsome about him, and who, in his tenure of

Meath, had built offices to the projected palace of Ardbraccan on such a scale that his successor converted one of these wings into a dwelling house — Price not having had time to complete the main body of the building. At Cashel he found his palace situated commodiously enough at the foot of the Rock—whence one can overlook the handsome solid mansion and its trim grounds. But access to the cathedral was a trouble, for Archbishop Price naturally liked to drive up in state, and even his predecessor, Bolton, had found some difficulties in the approach. Bolton wrote to Swift in 1835 :—

"I am now wholly employed in digging up rocks and making the way easier to the church ; which if I can succeed in, I design to repair a very venerable old fabrick that was built here in the time of our ignorant, as we are pleased to call them, ancestors. I wish this age had some of their piety, though we gave up, instead of it, some of our immense erudition."

Then, after an invitation to the Dean to come and view "King Cormack's chapel, his bedchamber, etc." Bolton adds—

"I really intend to lay out a thousand pounds to preserve this old church ; and I am sure you would be of service to posterity if you assisted me in the doing of it."

Unhappily the intention was never carried out ; and Archbishop Price, in presence of the same inconvenience, resorted to a less costly expedient. For he procured first of all an Act of Parliament (passed in 1747) reciting that, whereas "in several dioceses cathedral churches are so incommodiously situated that

they cannot be conveniently resorted to for divine service," power should be given to the chief governor, with assent of the privy council, to " remove the site of a cathedral church to some convenient parish church." This, although stated as a general principle, had reference apparently to Cashel only. At Cashel alone, at all events, it was acted upon ; an Act of Council, passed in 1749, authorised the removal of the cathedral from the Rock into the town. This of course was only possible in a spiritual or metaphorical sense. But if they could not remove the cathedral, they could at least destroy it, and a regiment of soldiers was employed to strip off the roof. It is a wonder that they spared Cormac's chapel. Having accomplished so much, Archbishop Price rested on his laurels ; the parish church (which is now the cathedral) was indeed begun ; but twenty-five years later a traveller (quoted by Mant) notes that it " had not a roof on it, the service being performed in a sorry room where county courts are held." Ireland in the eighteenth century was indeed a wonderful country.

So ends the history of the famous Rock. It is still used as a burying ground for certain privileged families, and a tall sculptured cross on the ancient Irish lines gives the Scullys a monument worth having, for it is a real addition to the beauty of the place. But is there nothing better than a burial ground to be made of this illustrious site ? Consider Cashel, socially and politically. There is the Pro-

testant bishop's palace comfortable and well-kept; there is the cathedral church (which was completed in due course, though not by Archbishop Price) down on the level, accessible enough for any coach, but the days of coach-driving bishops are over. And there, high on the summit, are round tower, chapel and cathedral, all carefully maintained as archæological specimens by a department of the English Government. I confess that it would not shock me in the least if the most interesting of ancient edifices in Ireland were restored to the religious uses for which it was originally built, and if mass were said again in the chapel of King Cormac.

The cathedral that was will never be the cathedral again. Cashel is still an archi-episcopal see in the Catholic church (though in the Protestant it has sunk to a mere bishopric), but its seat is now in Thurles—with new palace and new cathedral. And, as it chances, I have never been so strongly impressed with the influence of the Catholic religion on Irish life as in that very town of Thurles, where I happened to arrive one afternoon in summer. A horse fair was just over, and it is not right to judge any town by a fair-day; yet town and population alike spoke to me of the centre of a grazing district where industry is a forgotten word. Big, lusty, half-gentlemen swaggered the dirty streets unattractively. I went out exploring and crossed the Suir by a bridge which a Norman tower still commanded. Beyond it,

one seemed to reach a sort of religious quarter : here was the cathedral and the bishop's residence beside it —beyond that again the walls of a large convent. I cycled on down a long street of thatched cottages along a road swarming with children, then, seeing nothing to attract me, turned back to look at the cathedral. The entrance was railed in, and an open space of gravel and flagged walk led to it ; several people were coming in and going out and chatting quietly to each other. I went in too. It was a wonderful change from the dirty market place and swaggering drunkards. In the twilight little could be seen in detail—perhaps better so—but the building was a finely proportioned Romanesque, and the great arches vaulted over noble spaces of gloom. The Lady Chapel, lit, with worshippers before it, had a magical effect in that half darkness ; and the whole building was pervaded with the gentle music of small bells rung softly somewhere above us. There was a constant quiet coming and going ; people rose from their knees and passed out, others passed in to their individual devotions. There was no special ceremony, yet the place was ready, expectant of worshippers. After all, I felt, here was the church really in the lives of men and women, ministering mystery and beauty, keeping a hold somehow on the lusty young squireens of the market place. Cashel and Holy Cross may be in ruins, but the religion of their builders is as strong as ever. And if at times some of us incline to think that its strength has

sapped other forms of life not less essential, it is well to realise also its use as well as its vitality.

I walked out across the flagged walks, where were old ladies with shawled heads still gossiping decorously: and the low ripple of the slow-flowing Suir under the bridge past the old Norman tower seemed

Holy Cross.

now only to complete and harmonise with the natural emotions and associations of the place.

My errand at Thurles was to visit the ruined Abbey of Holy Cross (some ten miles from Cashel), which was founded in 1168 by Donal O'Brien for the Benedictines. The "black monks" lived here in 1182, when a change took place which, according to the

fragmentary MS. left by a Cistercian chronicler, "should be called rather a transfer" to the younger order. It is fair to infer that the Benedictines would have called it something different. But at all events its flourishing was under the white monks, and it was thrice rebuilt: for the second time in 1214, and later, at an unspecified date, "in a far finer style than that of King Donald." Part of these augmentations were the beautiful cloisters which Mr. Thomson has not drawn—being attracted by the west front, which looks out upon the reedy Suir, so convenient for fish days. The whole place is of great extent, its various garths and cloisters little broken: and it has a suggestion of some graceful Oxford college, which would be complete if it had been our fate to see Oxford in ruins.

Let us follow its history. In 1200 somehow or other the monastery became possessed of the relic which made its special glory—a piece of the Holy Cross. Tradition says that this was procured for the order by the "Good Woman" whose son is buried in the beautiful tomb sketched here: and the Cistercian chronicler suggests that the "Good Woman" can be no other lady than Henry II.'s Queen Eleanor —a startling theory. But at all events the place enjoyed high patronage: in 1340 Edward III. confirmed Donal's grant, as King John had done before him. In 1414 the Earl of Ormonde, and Thomas de Botelir, then Lord-Deputy, granted their special protection to it, as a chief glory of their territory. And

in 1563, after the dissolution, it fell into no unfriendly hands, being granted with 450 acres of land

The Tomb of the Good Woman's Son.

to the then Earl of Ormonde. Its line of abbots lasted till after 1700—the monks still hanging on

and coming tremulously back under the Butler protection.

It may be well to recall that the founder of the Butler stock was Theobald FitzWalter, who, coming over with Henry II., got great lands in Wicklow and Tipperary—along with the title and duties of Chief Butler to the King. The sixth Chief Butler was created Earl of Ormonde in 1328. Two centuries later, the tenth Earl grew rich, perhaps at some sacrifice of conscience, for Holy Cross was one of nine religious houses granted to him. Yet, though the Earls doubtless pocketed the revenues, they enabled the monks to remain in their cells and chapels: and throughout the reign of Elizabeth Holy Cross flourished in great repute. One of her statesmen described this relic as "the idol which the Irish more superstitiously reverence than all the idolatries of Ireland." In 1600 Hugh O'Neill came down in state to visit it—making, Fynes Morison says, a religious pretext for a political journey into Leath Mogh. And in 1603, when Red Hugh O'Donnell was on his way south to join the Spaniards at Kinsale, he also came to the gate, and had the sacred fragment brought out to confer benediction on his journey.

After the break-up of the old Irish order under James and Charles, the relic fell into the custody of Walter, eleventh Earl of Ormonde, who before his death in 1632 (seeing his grandson, the first Duke, a Protestant) confided it to one Dr. Fennel till the house should return to its religious allegiance. When

any heir of Ormonde again professed Catholicism, it was to revert to him as a sacred monument ; yet only "by way of trust or safe-keeping," for any church or convent which might have a claim on it, in case "the Catholick and Roman religion do flourish hereafter in this kingdom as hereto it hath."

The sequel is curious. Lord Walter's great grandson, the second Duke, handed the relic with Lord Walter's original instructions to a Mr. Valentine Smyth in 1691 (when the Catholic cause had been finally discomfited). Smyth passed it to a Mrs. Butler of Kilcash, she to a Miss Kavanagh of Borris, and she again in 1809 to the Catholic Bishop of Cork, who deposited the relic in the Ursuline convent of Cork, "it being the first regular monastery established in Ireland" since the dissolution ; and when the Ursulines moved to Blackrock, it moved with them, and there it is now.

Two other memories there are besides these which I have called up, not to be overlooked by whoever visits this district about Cashel. One is that of Father Mathew, born quite near the Rock in the early part of last century. Probably no single man has produced in modern times so great an effect by his personal exhortations. It is perhaps only natural that the effects have sadly faded out of sight and out of mind ; drink is a sore curse in the country, and a new apostle of temperance would have plenty of work to do. But there are many men still living

who took the pledge from Father Mathew and have kept it rigidly to this day.

The second name that I have to recall is one that may very fittingly help me to bring this book to a close. Geoffrey Keating was born in Elizabeth's reign, a native of Tipperary, sprung from a Norman-Irish stock. He was educated for the priesthood on the Continent, and, returning to his own country a doctor of divinity, was appointed to a church. Here (says Douglas Hyde, that later glory of the Gael who traces his descent, like Keating, not to Gael but to Norman Gall) Keating's fame as a preacher drew crowds together; and so it happened once that he preached before the mistress of Carew, Lord President of Munster, and chose a subject which gave her reason to apply the sermon near home. She complained to Carew, who issued a warrant for Keating's arrest under the laws against popery; but the preacher was warned, and fled into the valley of Aherlow, that deep cleft—scene of many battles—which intervenes between the Galtees and the town of Tipperary. In its fastnesses he lay hid for years; and this was the period when he conceived the design of writing the history of Ireland from the earliest times to the Norman conquest.

His study and cell was a cave in the Galtees; but to get materials he travelled far and wide in disguise, often at deadly risk, seeking out "the ancient vellum books at that time still preserved in the families of the ancient Brehons or in the neighbourhood of the

ancient monasteries." Working in no critical spirit, he transmits many things that are incredible, and on that account did something to lower the general credit of native history. Yet he preserves also much that is invaluable to us, taken straight from the old documents that he had before him, many of which are lost. His work was contraband, and could only circulate in manuscript, but hundreds of copies of it were diffused over Ireland. Its popularity was natural, for he wrote with the avowed intention of justifying the Irish against the unfairness which in his opinion English writers, such as Spenser, Stanihurst, Hanmer, Morison, and the others had shown. These men, he said, went through the Irish annals like a beetle in a garden—seeking only for what was foul.

"They never allude to the virtues and the good customs of the old Anglo-Irish and Gaelic nobility who dwelt in Ireland in their time. They write not of their piety or their valour or of what monasteries they founded, what lands and endowments they gave to the Church, what immunities they granted to the ollaves, their bounty to the ecclesiastics and prelates of the Church, the relief they afforded to orphans and the poor, their munificence to men of learning and their hospitality to strangers, which was so great that it may be said in truth that they were not at any time surpassed by any nation of Europe in generosity and hospitality in proportion to the abilities they possessed. Witness the meetings of the learned which they used to convene, a custom unheard of among other nations of Europe. And yet nothing of all this can be found in the English writers of the time, but they dwell upon the customs of the vulgar and upon the stories of ignorant old women, neglecting the illustrious action of the nobility, and all that relates to the ancient Gaels that inhabited this island before the invasion of the Anglo-Normans."

It is a long time since Keating wrote, yet *plus cela change, plus c'est la même chose.* A friend of mine has written (yielding not for the first or last time to the temptations of a neat phrase) that Irish history is for Englishmen to remember, and for Irishmen to forget. It will be time to talk of remembering or forgetting when the facts are generally familiar either to Englishmen or Irishmen : and, though we recognise in Keating, as in all native historians, a lack of critical method, yet a reading of their accounts will often bring life into what seemed a dead skeleton, or mere inarticulate mass of dry bones, when studied in the histories more generally accessible.

But Keating's significance is other and greater than merely as a historian. He was contemporary with the Four Masters, who like him gathered and digested all that they could find in the ancient records of their country. But they, the descendants of hereditary and professed historians, maintained the professional tradition of a deliberately archaic style, which scorned popular comprehension. Keating wrote for the people in the Irish which was spoken by educated men of his day. He is the first classic of modern Irish prose : and not without good reason his name is borne by *Craobh an Chéitinnigh*, the Keating branch of the Gaelic League—perhaps the most active group in that vigorous organisation which works so valiantly to keep alive, not only the ancient tongue, but the ancient literary tradition and the distinctive national life, which, through Keating, through

Eugene O'Rahilly, through Red Donough Macnamara, through Owen Roe O'Sullivan, Seaghan Clárach Mac-Donnell, Raftery of Galway, and many another name now becoming newly famous, were fostered and handed down with care and honour even in the worst adversity. These, at the eleventh hour and after careless and ill-instructed generations have let them fall into a ruin worse than Cashel's, we still hope to rescue and raise again for our stock and our seed to renew and make perpetual on the Fair Hills of Ireland—which, lacking these, would lack consecration and be left mere beauty without a soul.

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